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THE WORKS OF GEORGE MEREDITH

MEMORIAL EDITION

VOLUME

XXVI

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GEORGE MEREDITH

POEMS

VOL. III

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1910

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GEORGE MEREDITH

POEMS

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CONTENTS

PAGE

A STAVE OF ROVING TIM, ... 1
The wind is East, the wind is West,

JUMP-TO-GLORY JANE, ... 5
A revelation came on Jane,

THE RIDDLE FOR MEN, ... 14
This Riddle rede or die,

THE SAGE ENAMOURED AND THE HONEST LADY, . . 15
One fairest of the ripe unwedded left

'LOVE IS WINGED FOR TWO,' 30

'ASK, IS LOVE DIVINE,' 30

'JOY IS FLEET,' 31

THE LESSON OF GRIEF, ... 31
Not ere the bitter herb we taste,

WIND ON THE LYRE, ... 32
That was the chirp of Ariel

THE YOUTHFUL QUEST, ... 33
His Lady queen of woods to meet,

THE EMPTY PURSE, ... 34
Thou, run to the dry on this wayside bank,

TO THE COMIC SPIRIT, ... 56
Sword of Common Sense!—

YOUTH IN MEMORY, ... 68
Days, when the ball of our vision

PENETRATION AND TRUST, ... 75
Sleek as a lizard at round of a stone,

Digitized by Google

PAGE

NIGHT OF FROST IN MAY, ... 76
With splendour of a silver day,

THE TEACHING OF THE NUDE, ... 79
A Satyr spied a Goddess in her bath,

BREATH OF THE BRIAR, ... 81
O briar-scents, on yon wet wing

EMPEDOCLES, ... 82
He leaped. With none to hinder,

ENGLAND BEFORE THE STORM, ... 83
The day that is the night of days,

TARDY SPRING, ... 85
Now the North wind ceases,

THE LABOURER, ... 87
For a Heracles in his fighting ire there is never the glory that follows

FORESIGHT AND PATIENCE, ... 89
Sprung of the father blood, the mother brain,

THE WARNING, ... 99
We have seen mighty men ballooning high,

OUTSIDE THE CROWD, ... 99
To sit on History in an easy chair,

TRAFALGAR DAY, ... 100
He leads : we hear our Seaman's call

Odes in Contribution to the Song of French History

THE REVOLUTION, ... 105
Not yet had History's Aetna smoked the skies,

NAPOLÉON, ... 116
Cannon his name,

Digitized by Google

Odes in Contribution to the Song of French History—*continued*

PAGE

FRANCE, ... 140
We look for her that sunlike stood

ALSACE-LORRAINE, ... 150
The sister Hours in circles linked,

THE CAGEING OF ARES, ... 170
How big of breast our Mother Gaea laughed

THE NIGHT-WALK, ... 175
Awakes for me and leaps from shroud

AT THE CLOSE, ... 178
To thee, dear God of Mercy, both appeal,

A GARDEN IDYL, ... 179
With sagest craft Arachne worked

A Reading of Life

THE VITAL CHOICE, ... 185
Or shall we run with Artemis

WITH THE HUNTRESS, ... 186
Through the water-eye of night,

WITH THE PERSUADER, ... 189
Who murmurs, hither, hither : who

THE TEST OF MANHOOD, ... 200
Like a flood river whirled at rocky banks,

THE HUELESS LOVE, ... 208
Unto that love must we through fire attain,

UNION IN DISSEVERANCE, ... 209
Sunset worn to its last vermilion he ;

SONG IN THE SONGLESS, ... 210
They have no song, the sedges dry,

Digitized by Google

A Reading of Life—*continued*

PAGE

THE BURDEN OF STRENGTH, ... 210
If that thou hast the gift of strength, then know

THE MAIN REGRET, ... 211
Seen, too clear and historic within us, our sins of omission

ALTERNATION, ... 211
Between the fountain and the rill

FOREST HISTORY, ... 212
Beneath the vans of doom did men pass in.

Fragments of the Iliad in English Hexameter Verse

THE INVECTIVE OF ACHILLES, ... 221
'Heigh me! brazen of front, thou glutton for plunder, how can one,
'Bibber besotted, with scowl of a cur, having heart of a deer, thou!

MARSHALLING OF THE ACHAIANS, ... 225
Like as a terrible fire feeds fast on a forest enormous,

AGAMEMNON IN THE FIGHT, ... 227
These, then, he left, and away where ranks were now clashing the thickest,

PARIS AND DIOMEDES, ... 228
So he, with a clear shout of laughter,

HYPNOS ON IDA, ... 230
They then to fountain-abundant Ida, mother of wild beasts,

CLASH IN ARMS OF THE ACHAIANS AND TROJANS, . 231
Not the sea-wave so bellows abroad when it bursts upon shingle,

THE HORSES OF ACHILLES, ... 232
So now the horses of Aiakides, off wide of the war-ground,

Digitized by Google

PAGE

THE MARES OF THE CAMARGUE, ... 234
A hundred mares, all white! their manes

'ATKINS,' 236
Yonder 's the man with his life in his hand,

THE VOYAGE OF THE 'OPHIR,' 237
Men of our race, we send you one

THE CRISIS, ... 239
Spirit of Russia, now has come

OCTOBER 21, 1905, ... 241
The hundred years have passed, and he

THE CENTENARY OF GARIBALDI, ... 243
We who have seen Italia in the throes,

THE WILD ROSE, ... 245
High climbs June's wild rose,

THE CALL, ... 247
Under what spell are we debased

ON COMO, ... 250
A rainless darkness drew o'er the lake

MILTON, ... 251
What splendour of imperial station man,

IRELAND, ... 253
Fire in her ashes Ireland feels

THE YEARS HAD WORN THEIR SEASONS' BELT, . . 255
The years had worn their seasons' belt,

FRAGMENTS, ... 257
Open horizons round,
A wilding little stubble flower
From labours through the night, outworn,
This love of nature, that allures to take

IL Y A CENT ANS, ... 259
That march of the funereal Past behold;

Digitized by Google

PAGE

YOUTH IN AGE, ... 261
Once I was part of the music I heard

Epitaphs

TO A FRIEND LOST, ... 265
When I remember, friend, whom lost I call,

M. M., ... 265
Who call her Mother and who calls her Wife

THE LADY C. M., ... 266
To them that knew her, there is vital flame

ON THE TOMBSTONE OF JAMES CHRISTOPHER WILSON, 266
Thou our beloved and light of Earth hast crossed

GORDON OF KHARTOUM, ... 266
Of men he would have raised to light he fell:

J. C. M., ... 267
A fountain of our sweetest, quick to spring

THE EMPEROR FREDERICK OF OUR TIME, . . . 267
With Alfred and St. Louis he doth win

ISLET THE DACHS, ... 267
Our Islet out of Helgoland, dismissed

ON HEARING THE NEWS FROM VENICE, . . . 268
Now dumb is he who waked the world to speak,

HAWARDEN, ... 269
When comes the lighted day for men to read

AT THE FUNERAL, ... 270
Her sacred body bear: the tenement

ANGELA BURDETT-COUTTS, ... 270
Long with us, now she leaves us; she has rest

THE YEAR'S SHEDDINGS, ... 270
The varied colours are a fitful heap:

INDEX OF FIRST LINES, ... 273

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ILLUSTRATIONS

'DEERLEAP WOODS' . . . . *Frontispiece*

From a photograph taken in 1909 by Frederick W. Evans.

These woods, at the foot of the North Downs in Abinger Parish, were always associated by the Author with the 'Woods of Westermain.'

'REDLANDS WOODS' . . . *Facing page* 34

From a photograph taken in 1909 by Frederick W. Evans.

These woods, on the spur of Leith Hill, South of Dorking, are intimately associated with much of the Author's poetical work.

'FIR WOODS NEAR LEITH HILL, SURREY' . " 212

From a photograph taken in 1909 by Frederick W. Evans.

These woods were a very favourite resort of the Author during a great portion of his life.

FACSIMILE REPRODUCTION OF A PORTION OF THE MS. OF 'MILTON' . . . " 251

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POEMS

VOL. III

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POEMS

A STAVE OF ROVING TIM

(ADDRESSED TO CERTAIN FRIENDLY TRAMPS.)

I

THE wind is East, the wind is West,
Blows in and out of haven;
The wind that blows is the wind that 's best,
And croak, my jolly raven!
If here awhile we jigged and laughed,
The like we will do yonder;
For he 's the man who masters a craft,
And light as a lord can wander.
So, foot the measure, Roving Tim,
And croak, my jolly raven!
The wind according to its whim
Is in and out of haven.

II

You live in rows of snug abodes,
With gold, maybe, for counting;
And mine 's the beck of the rainy roads
Against the sun a-mounting.
I take the day as it behaves,
Nor shiver when 'tis airy;
But comes a breeze, all you are on waves,
Sick chickens o' Mother Carey!

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So, now for next, cries Roving Tim,
And croak, my jolly raven!
The wind according to its whim
Is in and out of haven.

III

Sweet lass, you screw a lovely leer,
To make a man consider.
If you were up with the auctioneer,
I 'd be a handsome bidder.
But wedlock clips the rover's wing;
She tricks him fly to spider;
And when we get to fights in the Ring,
It 's trumps when you play outsider.
So, wrench and split, cries Roving Tim,
And croak, my jolly raven!
The wind according to its whim
Is in and out of haven.

IV

Along my winding way I know
A shady dell that 's winking;
The very corner for Self and Co
To do a world of thinking.
And shall I this? and shall I that?
Till Nature answers, ne'ther!
Strike match and light your pipe in your hat,
Rejoicing in sound shoe-leather!
So lead along, cries Roving Tim,
And croak, my jolly raven!
The wind according to its whim
Is in and out of haven.

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V

A cunning hand 'll hand you bread,
With freedom for your capers.
I 'm not so sure of a cunning head;
It steers to pits or vapours.
But as for Life, we 'll bear in sight
The lesson Nature teaches;
Regard it in a sailoring light,
And treat it like thirsty leeches.
So, fly your jib, cries Roving Tim,
And top your boom, old raven!
The wind according to its whim
Is in and out of haven.

VI

She 'll take, to please her dame and dad,
The shopman nicely shaven.
She 'll learn to think o' the marching lad
When perchers show they 're craven.
You say the shopman piles a heap,
While I perhaps am fasting;
And bless your wits, it haunts him in sleep,
His tin-kettle chance of lasting!
So hail the road, cries Roving Tim,
And hail the rain, old raven!
The wind according to its whim
Is in and out of haven.

VII

He 's half a wife, yon pecker bill;
A book and likewise preacher.
With any soul, in a game of skill,
He 'll prove your over-reacher.

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The reason is, his brains are bent
On doing things right single.
You 'd wish for them when pitching your tent
At night in a whirly dingle!
So, off we go, cries Roving Tim,
And on we go, old raven!
The wind according to its whim
Is in and out of haven.

VIII

Lord, no, man's lot is not for bliss;
To call it woe is blindness:
It 's here a kick, and it 's there a kiss,
And here and there a kindness.
He starts a hare and calls her joy;
He runs her down to sorrow:
The dogs within him bother the boy,
But 'tis a new day to-morrow.
So, I at helm, cries Roving Tim,
And you at bow, old raven!
The wind according to its whim
Is in and out of haven.

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JUMP-TO-GLORY JANE

I

A REVELATION came on Jane,
The widow of a labouring swain:
And first her body trembled sharp,
Then all the woman was a harp
With winds along the strings; she heard,
Though there was neither tone nor word.

II

For past our hearing was the air,
Beyond our speaking what it bare,
And she within herself had sight
Of heaven at work to cleanse outright,
To make of her a mansion fit
For angel hosts inside to sit.

III

They entered, and forthwith entranced,
Her body braced, her members danced;
Surprisingly the woman leapt;
And countenance composed she kept;
As gossip neighbours in the lane
Declared, who saw and pitied Jane.

IV

These knew she had been reading books,
The which was witnessed by her looks
Of late: she had a mania
For mad folk in America,
And said for sure they led the way,
But meat and beer were meant to stay.

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V

That she had visited a fair,
Had seen a gauzy lady there,
Alive with tricks on legs alone,
As good as wings, was also known:
And longwhiles in a sullen mood,
Before her jumping, Jane would brood.

VI

A good knee's height, they say, she sprang;
Her arms and feet like those who hang:
As if afire the body sped,
And neither pair contributed.
She jumped in silence: she was thought
A corpse to resurrection caught.

VII

The villagers were mostly dazed;
They jeered, they wondered, and they praised.
'Twas guessed by some she was inspired,
And some would have it she had hired
An engine in her petticoats,
To turn their wits and win their votes.

VIII

Her first was Winny Earnes, a kind
Of woman not to dance inclined;
But she went up, entirely won,
Ere Jump-to-glory Jane had done;
And once a vixen wild for speech,
She found the better way to preach.

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IX

No long time after, Jane was seen
Directing jumps at Daddy Green;
And that old man, to watch her fly,
Had eyebrows made of arches high;
Till homeward he likewise did hop,
Oft calling on himself to stop!

X

It was a scene when man and maid,
Abandoning all other trade,
And careless of the call to meals,
Went jumping at the woman's heels.
By dozens they were counted soon,
Without a sound to tell their tune.

XI

Along the roads they came, and crossed
The fields, and o'er the hills were lost,
And in the evening reappeared;
Then short like hobbled horses reared,
And down upon the grass they plumped:
Alone their Jane to glory jumped.

XII

At morn they rose, to see her spring
All going as an engine thing;
And lighter than the gossamer
She led the bobbers following her,
Past old acquaintances, and where
They made the stranger stupid stare.

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XIII

When turnips were a filling crop,
In scorn they jumped a butcher's shop:
Or, spite of threats to flog and souse,
They jumped for shame a public-house:
And much their legs were seized with rage
If passing by the vicarage.

XIV

The tightness of a hempen rope
Their bodies got; but laundry soap
Not handsomer can rub the skin
For token of the washed within.
Occasionally coughers cast
A leg aloft and coughed their last.

XV

The weaker maids and some old men,
Requiring rafters for the pen
On rainy nights, were those who fell.
The rest were quite a miracle,
Refreshed as you may search all round
On Club-feast days and cry, Not found!

XVI

For these poor innocents, that slept
Against the sky, soft women wept:
For never did they any theft;
'Twas known when they their camping left,
And jumped the cold out of their rags;
In spirit rich as money-bags.

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XVII

They jumped the question, jumped reply;
And whether to insist, deny,
Reprove, persuade, they jumped in ranks
Or singly, straight the arms to flanks,
And straight the legs, with just a knee
For bending in a mild degree.

XVIII

The villagers might call them mad;
An endless holiday they had,
Of pleasure in a serious work:
They taught by leaps where perils lurk,
And with the lambkins practised sports
For 'scaping Satan's pounds and quarts.

XIX

It really seemed on certain days,
When they bobbed up their Lord to praise,
And bobbing up they caught the glance
Of light, our secret is to dance,
And hold the tongue from hindering peace;
To dance out preacher and police.

XX

Those flies of boys disturbed them sore
On Sundays and when daylight wore:
With withies cut from hedge or copse,
They treated them as whipping-tops,
And flung big stones with cruel aim;
Yet all the flock jumped on the same.

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XXI

For what could persecution do
To worry such a blessed crew,
On whom it was as wind to fire,
Which set them always jumping higher?
The parson and the lawyer tried,
By meek persistency defied.

XXII

But if they bore, they could pursue
As well, and this the Bishop too;
When inner warnings proved him plain
The chase for Jump-to-glory Jane.
She knew it by his being sent
To bless the feasting in the tent.

XXIII

Not less than fifty years on end,
The Squire had been the Bishop's friend:
And his poor tenants, harmless ones,
With souls to save! fed not on buns,
But angry meats: she took her place
Outside to show the way to grace.

XXIV

In apron suit the Bishop stood;
The crowding people kindly viewed.
A gaunt grey woman he saw rise
On air, with most beseeching eyes:
And evident as light in dark
It was, she set to him for mark.

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XXV

Her highest leap had come: with ease
She jumped to reach the Bishop's knees:
Compressing tight her arms and lips,
She sought to jump the Bishop's hips:
Her aim flew at his apron-band,
That he might see and understand.

XXVI

The mild inquiry of his gaze
Was altered to a peaked amaze,
At sight of thirty in ascent,
To gain his notice clearly bent:
And greatly Jane at heart was vexed
By his ploughed look of mind perplexed.

XXVII

In jumps that said, Beware the pit!
More eloquent than speaking it—
That said, Avoid the boiled, the roast;
The heated nose on face of ghost,
Which comes of drinking: up and o'er
The flesh with me! did Jane implore.

XXVIII

She jumped him high as huntsmen go
Across the gate; she jumped him low,
To coax him to begin and feel
His infant steps returning, peel
His mortal pride, exposing fruit,
And off with hat and apron suit.

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XXIX

We need much patience, well she knew,
And out and out, and through and through,
When we would gentlefolk address,
However we may seek to bless:
At times they hide them like the beasts
From sacred beams; and mostly priests.

XXX

He gave no sign of making bare,
Nor she of faintness or despair.
Inflamed with hope that she might win,
If she but coaxed him to begin,
She used all arts for making fain;
The mother with her babe was Jane.

XXXI

Now stamped the Squire, and knowing not
Her business, waved her from the spot.
Encircled by the men of might,
The head of Jane, like flickering light,
As in a charger, they beheld
Ere she was from the park expelled.

XXXII

Her grief, in jumps of earthly weight,
Did Jane around communicate:
For that the moment when began
The holy but mistaken man,
In view of light, to take his lift,
They cut him from her charm adrift!

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XXXIII

And he was lost: a banished face
For ever from the ways of grace,
Unless pinched hard by dreams in fright.
They saw the Bishop's wavering sprite
Within her look, at come and go,
Long after he had caused her woe.

XXXIV

Her greying eyes (until she sank
At Fredsham on the wayside bank,
Like cinder heaps that whitened lie
From coals that shot the flame to sky)
Had glassy vacancies, which yearned
For one in memory discerned.

XXXV

May those who ply the tongue that cheats,
And those who rush to beer and meats,
And those whose mean ambition aims
At palaces and titled names,
Depart in such a cheerful strain
As did our Jump-to-glory Jane!

XXXVI

Her end was beautiful: one sigh.
She jumped a foot when it was nigh.
A lily in a linen clout
She looked when they had laid her out.
It is a lily-light she bears
For England up the ladder-stairs.

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THE RIDDLE FOR MEN

I

THIS Riddle rede or die,
Says History since our Flood,
To warn her sons of power:—
It can be truth, it can be lie;
Be parasite to twist awry;
The drouthy vampire for your blood;
The fountain of the silver flower;
A brand, a lure, a web, a crest;
Supple of wax or tempered steel;
The spur to honour, snake in nest:
'Tis as you will with it to deal;
To wear upon the breast,
Or trample under heel.

II

And rede you not aright,
Says Nature, still in red
Shall History's tale be writ!
For solely thus you lead to light
The trailing chapters she must write,
And pass my fiery test of dead
Or living through the furnace-pit:
Dislinked from who the softer hold
In grip of brute, and brute remain:
Of whom the woeful tale is told,
How for one short Sultanic reign,
Their bodies lapse to mould,
Their souls behowl the plain.

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THE SAGE ENAMOURED AND THE HONEST LADY

I

One fairest of the ripe unwedded left
Her shadow on the Sage's path; he found,
By common signs, that she had done a theft.
He could have made the sovereign heights resound
With questions of the wherefore of her state:
He on far other but an hour before
Intent. And was it man, or was it mate,
That she disdained? or was there haply more?

About her mouth a placid humour slipped
The dimple, as you see smooth lakes at eve
Spread melting rings where late a swallow dipped.
The surface was attentive to receive,
The secret underneath enfolded fast.
She had the step of the unconquered, brave,
Not arrogant; and if the vessel's mast
Waved liberty, no challenge did it wave.
Her eyes were the sweet world desired of souls,
With something of a wavering line unspelt.
They held the look whose tenderness condoles
For what the sister in the look has dealt
Of fatal beyond healing; and her tones
A woman's honeyed amorous outvied,
As when in a dropped viol the wood-throb moans
Among the sobbing strings, that plain and chide

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Like infants for themselves, less deep to thrill
Than those rich mother-notes for them breathed round.
Those voices are not magic of the will
To strike love's wound, but of love's wound give sound,
Conveying it; the yearnings, pains and dreams.
They waft to the moist tropics after storm,
When out of passion spent thick incense steams,
And jewel-belted clouds the wreck transform.

Was never hand on brush or lyre to paint
Her gracious manners, where the nuptial ring
Of melody clasped motion in restraint:
The reed-blade with the breeze thereof may sing.
With such endowments armed was she and decked
To make her spoken thoughts eclipse her kind;
Surpassing many a giant intellect,
The marvel of that cradled infant mind.
It clenched the tiny fist, it curled the toe;
Cherubic laughed, enticed, dispensed, absorbed;
And promised in fair feminine to grow
A Sage's match and mate, more heavenly orbed.

II

Across his path the spouseless Lady cast
Her shadow, and the man that thing became.
His youth uprising called his age the Past.
This was the strong grey head of laurelled name,
And in his bosom an inverted Sage
Mistook for light of morn the light which sank.
But who while veins run blood shall know the page
Succeeding ere we turn upon our blank?
Comes Beauty with her tale of moon and cloud,
Her silvered rims of mystery pointing in
To hollows of the half-veiled unavowed,
Where beats her secret life, grey heads will spin

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Quick as the young, and spell those hieroglyphs
Of phosphorescent dusk, devoutly bent;
They drink a cup to whirl on dizzier cliffs
For their shamed fall, which asks, why was she sent!
Why, and of whom, and whence; and tell they truth,
The legends of her mission to beguile?

Hard likeness to the toilful apes of youth
He bore at times, and tempted the sly smile;
And not on her soft lips was it descried.
She stepped her way benevolently grave:
Nor sign that Beauty fed her worm of pride,
By tossing victim to the courtier knave,
Let peep, nor of the naughty pride gave sign.
Rather 'twas humbleness in being pursued,
As pilgrim to the temple of a shrine.
Had he not wits to pierce the mask he wooed?
All wisdom's armoury this man could wield;
And if the cynic in the Sage it pleased
Traverse her woman's curtain and poor shield,
For new example of a world diseased;
Showing her shrineless, not a temple, bare;
A curtain ripped to tatters by the blast;
Yet she most surely to this man stood fair:
He worshipped like the young enthusiast,
Named simpleton or poet. Did he read
Right through, and with the voice she held reserved
Amid her vacant ruins jointly plead?

Compassion for the man thus noble nerved
The pity for herself she felt in him,
To wreak a deed of sacrifice, and save;
At least, be worthy. That our soul may swim,
We sink our heart down bubbling under wave.

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It bubbles till it drops among the wrecks.
But, ah! confession of a woman's breast:
She eminent, she honoured of her sex!
Truth speaks, and takes the spots of the confessed,
To veil them. None of women, save their vile,
Plays traitor to an army in the field.
The cries most vindicating most defile.
How shall a cause to Nature be appealed,
When, under pressure of their common foe,
Her sisters shun the Mother and disown,
On pain of his intolerable crow
Above the fiction, built for him, o'erthrown?
Irrational he is, irrational
Must they be, though not Reason's light shall wane
In them with ever Nature at close call,
Behind the fiction torturing to sustain;
Who hear her in the milk, and sometimes make
A tongueless answer, shivered on a sigh:
Whereat men dread their lofty structure's quake
Once more, and in their hosts for tocsin ply
The crazy roar of peril, leonine
For injured majesty. That sigh of dames
Is rare and soon suppressed. Not they combine
To shake the structure sheltering them, which tames
Their lustier if not wilder: fixed are they,
In elegancy scarce denoting ease:
And do they breathe, it is not to betray
The martyr in the caryatides.
Yet here and there along the graceful row
Is one who fetches breath from deeps, who deems,
Moved by a desperate craving, their old foe
May yield a trustier friend than woman seems,
And aid to bear the sculptured floral weight
Massed upon heads not utterly of stone:
May stamp endurance by expounding fate.

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She turned to him, and, This you seek is gone;
Look in, she said, as pants the furnace, brief,
Frost-white. She gave his hearing sight to view
The silent chamber of a brown curled leaf:
Thing that had throbbed ere shot black lightning through.
No further sign of heart could he discern:
The picture of her speech was winter sky;
A headless figure folding a cleft urn,
Where tears once at the overflow were dry.

III

So spake she her first utterance on the rack.
It softened torment, in the funeral hues
Round wan Romance at ebb, but drove her back
To listen to herself, herself accuse
Harshly as Love's imperial cause allowed.
She meant to grovel, and her lover praised
So high o'er the condemnatory crowd,
That she perforce a fellow phoenix blazed.

The picture was of hand fast joined to hand,
Both pushed from angry skies, their grasp more pledged
Under the threatened flash of a bright brand
At arm's length up, for severing action edged.
Why, then Love's Court of Honour contemplate;
And two drowned shorecasts, who, for the life esteemed
Above their lost, invoke an advocate
In passion's purity, thereby redeemed.

Redeemed, uplifted, glimmering on a throne,
The woman stricken by an arrow falls.
His advocate she can be, not her own,
If, Traitress to thy sex! one sister calls.

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Have we such scenes of drapery's mournfulness
On Beauty's revelations, witched we plant,
Over the fair shape humbled to confess,
An angel's buckler, with loud choiric chant.

IV

No knightly sword to serve, nor harp of bard,
The lady's hand in her physician's knew.
She had not hoped for them as her award,
When zig-zag on the tongue electric flew
Her charge of counter-motives, none impure:
But muteness whipped her skin. She could have said,
Her free confession was to work his cure,
Show proofs for why she could not love or wed.
Were they not shown? His muteness shook in thrall
Her body on the verge of that black pit
Sheer from the treacherous confessional,
Demanding further, while perusing it.

Slave is the open mouth beneath the closed.
She sank; she snatched at colours; they were peel
Of fruit past savour, in derision rosed.
For the dark downward then her soul did reel.
A press of hideous impulse urged to speak:
A novel dread of man enchained her dumb.
She felt the silence thicken, heard it shriek,
Heard Life subsiding on the eternal hum:
Welcome to women, when, between man's laws
And Nature's thirsts, they, soul from body torn,
Give suck at breast to a celestial cause,
Named by the mouth infernal, and forsworn.

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Nathless her forehead twitched a sad content,
To think the cure so manifest, so frail
Her charm remaining. Was the curtain's rent
Too wide? he but a man of that herd male?
She saw him as that herd of the forked head
Butting the woman harrowed on her knees,
Clothed only in life's last devouring red.
Confession at her fearful instant sees
Judicial Silence write the devil fact
In letters of the skeleton: at once,
Swayed on the supplication of her act,
The rabble reading, roaring to denounce,
She joins. No longer colouring, with skips
At tangles, picture that for eyes in tears
Might swim the sequence, she addressed her lips
To do the scaffold's office at his ears.

Into the bitter judgement of that herd
On women, she, deeming it present, fell.
Her frenzy of abasement hugged the word
They stone with, and so pile their citadel
To launch at outcasts the foul levin bolt.
As had he flung it, in her breast it burned.
Face and reflect it did her hot revolt
From hardness, to the writhing rebel turned;
Because the golden buckler was withheld,
She to herself applies the powder-spark,
For joy of one wild demon burst ere quelled,
Perishing to astound the tyrant Dark.

She had the Scriptural word so scored on brain,
It rang through air to sky, and rocked a world
That danced down shades the scarlet dance profane;
Most women! see! by the man's view dustward hurled,

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Impenitent, submissive, torn in two.
They sink upon their nature, the unnamed,
And sops of nourishment may get some few,
In place of understanding, scourged and shamed.

Barely have seasoned women understood
The great Irrational, who thunders power,
Drives Nature to her primitive wild wood,
And courts her in the covert's dewy hour;
Returning to his fortress nigh night's end,
With execration of her daughters' lures.
They help him the proud fortress to defend,
Nor see what front it wears, what life immures,
The murder it commits; nor that its base
Is shifty as a huckster's opening deal
For bargain under smoothest market face,
While Gentleness bids frigid Justice feel,
Justice protests that Reason is her seat;
Elect Convenience, as Reason masked,
Hears calmly cramped Humanity entreat;
Until a sentient world is overtasked,
And rouses Reason's fountain-self: she calls
On Nature; Nature answers: Share your guilt
In common when contention cracks the walls
Of the big house which not on me is built.

The Lady said as much as breath will bear;
To happier sisters inconceivable:
Contemptible to veterans of the fair,
Who show for a convolving pearly shell,
A treasure of the shore, their written book.
As much as woman's breath will bear and live
Shaped she to words beneath a knotted look,
That held as if for grain the summing sieve.

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Her judge now brightened without pause, as wakes
Our homely daylight after dread of spells.
Lips sugared to let loose the little snakes
Of slimy lustres ringing elfin bells
About a story of the naked flesh,
Intending but to put some garment on,
Should learn, that in the subject they enmesh,
A traitor lurks and will be known anon.
Delusion heating pricks the torpid doubt,
Stationed for index down an ancient track:
And ware of it was he while she poured out
A broken moon on forest-waters black.

Though past the stage where midway men are skilled
To scan their senses wriggling under plough,
When yet to the charmed seed of speech distilled,
Their hearts are fallow, he, and witless how,
Loathing, had yielded, like bruised limb to leech,
Not handsomely; but now beholding bleed
Soul of the woman in her prostrate speech,
The valour of that rawness he could read.
Thence flashed it, as the crimson currents ran
From senses up to thoughts, how she had read
Maternally the warm remainder man
Beneath his crust, and Nature's pity shed,
In shedding dearer than heart's blood to light
His vision of the path mild Wisdom walks.
Therewith he could espy Confession's fright;
Her need of him: these flowers grow on stalks;
They suck from soil, and have their urgencies
Beside and with the lovely face mid leaves.
Veins of divergencies, convergencies,
Our botanist in womankind perceives;

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And if he hugs no wound, the man can prize
That splendid consummation and sure proof
Of more than heart in her, who might despise,
Who drowns herself, for pity up aloof
To soar and be like Nature's pity: she
Instinctive of what virtue in young days
Had served him for his pilot-star on sea,
To trouble him in haven. Thus his gaze
Came out of rust, and more than the schooled tongue
Was gifted to encourage and assure.
He gave her of the deep well she had sprung;
And name it gratitude, the word is poor.
But name it gratitude, is aught as rare
From sex to sex? And let it have survived
Their conflict, comes the peace between the pair,
Unknown to thousands husbanded and wived:
Unknown to Passion, generous for prey:
Unknown to Love, too blissful in a truce.
Their tenderest of self did each one slay;
His cloak of dignity, her fleur de luce;
Her lily flower, and his abolla cloak,
Things living, slew they, and no artery bled.
A moment of some sacrificial smoke
They passed, and were the dearer for their dead.

He learnt how much we gain who make no claims.
A nightcap on his flicker of grey fire
Was thought of her sharp shudder in the flames,
Confessing; and its conjured image dire,
Of love, the torrent on the valley dashed;
The whirlwind swathing tremulous peaks; young force,
Visioned to hold corrected and abashed
Our senile emulous; which rolls its course

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Proud to the shattering end; with these few last
Hot quintessential drops of bryony juice,
Squeezed out in anguish: all of that once vast!
And still, though having skin for man's abuse,
Though no more glorying in the beauteous wreath
Shot skyward from a blood at passionate jet,
Repenting but in words, that stand as teeth
Between the vivid lips; a vassal set;
And numb, of formal value. Are we true
In nature, never natural thing repents;
Albeit receiving punishment for due,
Among the group of this world's penitents;
Albeit remorsefully regretting, oft
Cravenly, while the scourge no shudder spares.

Our world believes it stabler if the soft
Are whipped to show the face repentance wears.
Then hear it, in a moan of atheist gloom,
Deplore the weedy growth of hypocrites;
Count Nature devilish, and accept for doom
The chasm between our passions and our wits!

Affecting lunar whiteness, patent snows,
It trembles at betrayal of a sore.
Hers is the glacier-conscience, to expose
Impurities for clearness at the core.

She to her hungered thundering in breast,
Ye shall not starve, not feebly designates
The world repressing as a life repressed,
Judged by the wasted martyrs it creates.

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How Sin, amid the shades Cimmerian,
Repents, she points for sight: and she avers,
The hoofed half-angel in the Puritan
Nigh reads her when no brutish wrath deters.

Sin against immaturity, the sin
Of ravenous excess, what deed divides
Man from vitality; these bleed within;
Bleed in the crippled relic that abides.
Perpetually they bleed; a limb is lost,
A piece of life, the very spirit maimed.
But culprit who the law of man has crossed
With Nature's dubiously within is blamed;
Despite our cry at cutting of the whip,
Our shiver in the night when numbers frown,
We but bewail a broken fellowship,
A sting, an isolation, a fall'n crown.

Abject of sinners is that sensitive,
The flesh, amenable to stripes, miscalled
Incorrigible: such title do we give
To the poor shrinking stuff wherewith we are walled;
And, taking it for Nature, place in ban
Our Mother, as a Power wanton-willed,
The shame and baffler of the soul of man,
The recreant, reptilious. Do thou build
Thy mind on her foundations in earth's bed;
Behold man's mind the child of her keen rod,
For teaching how the wits and passions wed
To rear that temple of the credible God;
Sacred the letters of her laws, and plain,
Will shine, to guide thy feet and hold thee firm:
Then, as a pathway through a field of grain,
Man's laws appear the blind progressive worm,

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That moves by touch, and thrust of linking rings
The which to endow with vision, lift from mud
To level of their nature's aims and springs,
Must those, the twain beside our vital flood,
Now on opposing banks, the twain at strife
(Whom the so rosy ferryman invites
To junction, and mid-channel over Life,
Unmasked to the ghostly, much asunder smites)
Instruct in deeper than Convenience,
In higher than the harvest of a year.
Only the rooted knowledge to high sense
Of heavenly can mount, and feel the spur
For fruitfullest advancement, eye a mark
Beyond the path with grain on either hand,
Help to the steering of our social Ark
Over the barbarous waters unto land.

For us the double conscience and its war,
The serving of two masters, false to both,
Until those twain, who spring the root and are
The knowledge in division, plight a troth
Of equal hands: nor longer circulate
A pious token for their current coin,
To growl at the exchange; they, mate and mate,
Fair feminine and masculine shall join
Upon an upper plane, still common mould,
Where stamped religion and reflective pace
A statelier measure, and the hoop of gold
Rounds to horizon for their soul's embrace.
Then shall those noblest of the earth and sun
Inmix unlike to waves on savage sea.
But not till Nature's laws and man's are one,
Can marriage of the man and woman be.

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V

He passed her through the sermon's dull defile.
Down under billowy vapour-gorges heaved
The city and the vale and mountain-pile.
She felt strange push of shuttle-threads that weaved.

A new land in an old beneath her lay;
And forth to meet it did her spirit rush,
As bride who without shame has come to say,
Husband, in his dear face that caused her blush.

A natural woman's heart, not more than clad
By station and bright raiment, gathers heat
From nakedness in trusted hands: she had
The joy of those who feel the world's heart beat,
After long doubt of it as fire or ice;
Because one man had helped her to breathe free;
Surprised to faith in something of a price
Past the old charity in chivalry:—
Our first wild step to right the loaded scales
Displaying women shamefully outweighed.
The wisdom of humaneness best avails
For serving justice till that fraud is brayed.
Her buried body fed the life she drank.
And not another stripping of her wound!
The startled thought on black delirium sank,
While with her gentle surgeon she communed,
And woman's prospect of the yoke repelled.
Her buried body gave her flowers and food;
The peace, the homely skies, the springs that
welled;
Love, the large love that folds the multitude.

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Soul's chastity in honesty, and this
With beauty, made the dower to men refused.
And little do they know the prize they miss;
Which is their happy fortune! Thus he mused.

For him, the cynic in the Sage had play
A hazy moment, by a breath dispersed;
To think, of all alive most wedded they,
Whom time disjoined! He needed her quick thirst
For renovated earth: on earth she gazed,
With humble aim to foot beside the wise.
Lo, where the eyelashes of night are raised
Yet lowly over morning's pure grey eyes.

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Love is winged for two,
In the worst he weathers,
When their hearts are tied;
But if they divide,
O too true!
Cracks a globe, and feathers, feathers,
Feathers all the ground bestrew.

I was breast of morning sea,
Rosy plume on forest dun,
I the laugh in rainy fleeces,
While with me
She made one.
Now must we pick up our pieces,
For that then so winged were we.

Ask, is Love divine,
Voices all are, ay.
Question for the sign,
There 's a common sigh.
Would we, through our years,
Love forego,
Quit of scars and tears?
Ah, but no, no, no!

Digitized by Google

Joy is fleet,
Sorrow slow.
Love, so sweet,
Sorrow will sow.
Love, that has flown
Ere day's decline,
Love to have known,
Sorrow, be mine!

THE LESSON OF GRIEF

Nor ere the bitter herb we taste,
Which ages thought of happy times,
To plant us in a weeping waste,
Rings with our fellows this one heart
Accordant chimes.

When I had shed my glad year's leaf,
I did believe I stood alone,
Till that great company of Grief
Taught me to know this craving heart
For not my own.

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WIND ON THE LYRE

THAT was the chirp of Ariel
You heard, as overhead it flew,
The farther going more to dwell,
And wing our green to wed our blue;
But whether note of joy or knell,
Not his own Father-singer knew;
Nor yet can any mortal tell,
Save only how it shivers through;
The breast of us a sounded shell,
The blood of us a lighted dew.

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THE YOUTHFUL QUEST

His Lady queen of woods to meet,
He wanders day and night:
The leaves have whisperings discreet,
The mossy ways invite.

Across a lustrous ring of space,
By covert hoods and caves,
Is promise of her secret face
In film that onward waves.

For darkness is the light astrain,
Astrain for light the dark.
A grey moth down a larches' lane
Unwinds a ghostly spark.

Her lamp he sees, and young desire
Is fed while cloaked she flies.
She quivers shot of violet fire
To ash at look of eyes.

Digitized by Google

THE EMPTY PURSE

A SERMON TO OUR LATER PRODIGAL SON

THOU, run to the dry on this wayside bank,
Too plainly of all the propellers bereft!
Quenched youth, and is that thy purse?
Even such limp slough as the snake has left
Slack to the gale upon spikes of whin,
For cast-off coat of a life gone blank,
In its frame of a grin at the seeker, is thine;
And thine to crave and to curse
The sweet thing once within.
Accuse him: some devil committed the theft,
Which leaves of the portly a skin,
No more; of the weighty a whine.

Pursue him: and first, to be sure of his track,
Over devious ways that have led to this,
In the stream's consecutive line,
Let memory lead thee back
To where waves Morning her fleur-de-lys,
Unflushed at the front of the roseate door
Unopened yet: never shadow there
Of a Tartarus lighted by Dis
For souls whose cry is, alack!
An ivory cradle rocks, apeep
Through his eyelashes' laugh, a breathing pearl.

Digitized by Google

Redlands Woods

Digitized by Google

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To where waves Morning her fleur-de-lys,
Unfurlished at the front of the roseate door
Unopened yet: never shadow there
Of a Tartar is hunted by Dis
For souls whose cry is alack!
An ivory cradle rocks, a peep
Through his eyelashes' lash, a breathing pearl.

Digitized by Google

Redlands Woods.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

There the young chief of the animals wore
A likeness to heavenly hosts, unaware
Of his love of himself; with the hours at leap.
In a dingle away from a rutted highroad,
Around him the earliest throstle and merle,
Our human smile between milk and sleep,
    Effervescent of Nature he crowed.
Fair was that season; furl over furl
The banners of blossom; a dancing floor
This earth; very angels the clouds; and fair
Thou on the tablets of forehead and breast:
Careless, a centre of vigilant care.
Thy mother kisses an infant curl.
The room of the toys was a boundless nest,
    A kingdom the field of the games,
    Till entered the craving for more,
    And the worshipped small body had aims.
A good little idol, as records attest,
When they tell of him lightly appeased in a
    scream
By sweets and caresses: he gave but sign
That the heir of a purse-plumped dominant
    race,
Accustomed to plenty, not dumb would pine.
Almost magician, his earliest dream
    Was lord of the unpossessed
    For a look; himself and his chase,
    As on puffs of a wind at whirl,
    Made one in the wink of a gleam.
    She kisses a locket curl,
She conjures to vision a cherub face,
    When her butterfly counted his day
    All meadow and flowers, mishap
    Derided, and taken for play
    The fling of an urchin's cap.

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When her butterfly showed him an eaglet born,
For preying too heedlessly bred,
What a heart clapped in thee then!
With what fuller colours of morn!
And high to the uttermost heavens it flew,
Swift as on poet's pen.
It flew to be wedded, to wed
The mystery scented around:
Issue of flower and dew,
Issue of light and sound:
Thinner than either; a thread
Spun of the dream they threw
To kindle, allure, evade.
It ran the sea-wave, the garden's dance,
To the forest's dark heart down a dappled glade;
Led on by a perishing glance,
By a twinkle's eternal waylaid.
Woman, the name was, when she took form;
Sheaf of the wonders of life. She fled,
Close imaged: she neared, far seen. How she made
Palpitate earth of the living and dead!
Did she not show thee the world designed
Solely for loveliness? Nested warm,
The day was the morrow in flight. And for thee,
She muted the discords, tuned, refined;
Drowned sharp edges beneath her cloak.
Eye of the waters, and throb of the tree,
Sliding on radiance, winging from shade,
With her witch-whisper o'er ruins, in reeds,
She sang low the song of her promise delayed;
Beckoned and died, as a finger of smoke
Astream over woodland. And was not she
History's heroines white on storm?
Remember her summons to valorous deeds.
Shone she a lure of the honey-bag swarm,

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Most was her beam on the knightly: she led
For the honours of manhood more than the prize;
Waved her magnetical yoke
Whither the warrior bled,
Ere to the bower of sighs.
And shy of her secrets she was; under deeps
Plunged at the breath of a thirst that woke
The dream in the cave where the Dreaded sleeps.

Away over heaven the young heart flew,
And caught many lustres, till some one said
(Or was it the thought into hearing grew?),
Not thou as commoner men!
Thy stature puffed and it swayed,
It stiffened to royal-erect;
A brassy trumpet brayed;
A whirling seized thy head;
The vision of beauty was flecked.
Note well the how and the when,
The thing that prompted and sped.
Thereanon the keen passions clapped wing,
Fixed eye, and the world was prey.
No simple world of thy greenblade Spring,
Nor world of thy flowerful prime
On the topmost Orient peak
Above a yet vaporous day.
Flesh was it, breast to beak:
A four-walled windowless world without ray,
Only darkening jets on a river of slime,
Where harsh over music as woodland jay,
A voice chants, Woe to the weak!
And along an insatiate feast,
Women and men are one
In the cup transforming to beast.

Digitized by Google

Magian worship they paid to their sun,
Lord of the Purse! Behold him climb.
Stalked ever such figure of fun
For monarch in great-grin pantomime?
See now the heart dwindle, the frame distend;
The soul to its anchorite cavern retreat,
From a life that reeks of the rotted end;
While he—is he pictureable? replete,
Gourd-like swells of the rank of the soil,
Hollow, more hollow at core.
And for him did the hundreds toil
Despised; in the cold and heat,
This image ridiculous bore
On their shoulders for morsels of meat!

Gross, with the fumes of incense full,
With parasites tickled, with slaves begirt,
He strutted, a cock, he bellowed, a bull,
He rolled him, a dog, in dirt.
And dog, bull, cock, was he, fanged, horned, plumed;
Original man, as philosophers vouch;
Carnivorous, cannibal; length-long exhumed,
Frightfully living and armed to devour;
The primitive weapons of prey in his pouch;
The bait, the line and the hook:
To feed on his fellows intent.
God of the Danaé shower,
He had but to follow his bent.
He battened on fowl not safely hutched,
On sheep astray from the crook;
A lure for the foolish in fold:
To carrion turning what flesh he touched.
And O the grace of his air,
As he at the goblet sips,

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A centre of girdles loosed,
With their grisly label, Sold!
Credulous hears the fidelity swear,
Which has roving eyes over yielded lips:
To-morrow will fancy himself the seduced,
The stuck in a treacherous slough,
Because of his faith in a purchased pair,
False to a vinous vow.

In his glory of banquet strip him bare,
And what is the creature we view?
Our pursy Apollo Apollyon's tool;
A small one, still of the crew
By serpent Apollyon blest:
His plea in apology, blindfold Fool.
A fool surcharged, propelled, unwarned;
Not viler, you hear him protest:
Of a popular countenance not incorrect.
But deeds are the picture in essence, deeds
Paint him the hooved and horned,
Despite the poor pother he pleads,
And his look of a nation's elect.
We have him, our quarry confessed!
And scan him: the features inspect
Of that bestial multiform: cry,
Corroborate I, O Samian Sage!
The book of thy wisdom, proved
On me, its last hieroglyph page,
Alive in the horned and hooved?
Thou! will he make reply.

Thus has the plenary purse
Done often: to do will engage
Anew upon all of thy like, or worse.

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And now is thy deepest regret
To be man, clean rescued from beast:
From the grip of the Sorcerer, Gold,
Celestially released.

But now from his cavernous hold,
Free may thy soul be set,
As a child of the Death and the Life, to learn,
Refreshed by some bodily sweat,
The meaning of either in turn,
What issue may come of the two:—
A morn beyond mornings, beyond all reach
Of emotional arms at the stretch to enfold:
A firmament passing our visible blue.
To those having nought to reflect it, 'tis nought;
To those who are misty, 'tis mist on the beach
From the billow withdrawing; to those who see
Earth, our mother, in thought,
Her spirit it is, our key.

Ay, the Life and the Death are her words to us here,
Of one significance, pricking the blind.
This is thy gain now the surface is clear:
To read with a soul in the mirror of mind
Is man's chief lesson.—Thou smilest! I preach!
Acid smiling, my friend, reveals
Abysses within; frigid preaching a street
Paved unconcernedly smooth
For the lecturer straight on his heels,
Up and down a policeman's beat;
Bearing tonics not labelled to soothe.
Thou hast a disgust of the sermon in rhyme.
It is not attractive in being too chaste.
The popular tale of adventure and crime

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Would equally sicken an overdone taste.
So, then, onward. Philosophy, thoughtless to soothe,
Lifts, if thou wilt, or there leaves thee supine.

Thy condition, good sooth, has no seeming of sweet;
It walks our first crags, it is flint for the tooth,
For the thirsts of our nature brine.
But manful has met it, manful will meet.
And think of thy privilege: supple with youth,
To have sight of the headlong swine,
Once fouling thee, jumping the dips!
As the coin of thy purse poured out:
An animal's holiday past:
And free of them thou, to begin a new bout;
To start a fresh hunt on a resolute blast:
No more an imp-ridden to bournes of eclipse:
Having knowledge to spur thee, a gift to compare;
Rubbing shoulder to shoulder, as only the book
Of the world can be read, by necessity urged.
For witness, what blinkers are they who look
From the state of the prince or the millionnaire!
They see but the fish they attract,
The hungers on them converged;
And never the thought in the shell of the act,
Nor ever life's fangless mirth.
But first, that the poisonous of thee be purged,
Go into thyself, strike Earth.
She is there, she is felt in a blow struck hard.
Thou findest a pugilist countering quick,
Cunning at drives where thy shutters are barred;
Not, after the studied professional trick,
Blue-sealing; she brightens the sight. Strike Earth,
Antaeus, young giant, whom fortune trips!
And thou com'st on a saving fact,
To nourish thy planted worth.

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Be it clay, flint, mud, or the rubble of chips,
Thy roots have grasp in the stern-exact:
The redemption of sinners deluded! the last
Dry handful, that bruises and saves.
To the common big heart are we bound right fast,
When our Mother admonishing nips
At the nakedness bare of a clout,
And we crave what the commonest craves.

This wealth was a fortress-wall,
Under which grew our grim little beast-god stout;
Self-worshipped, the foe, in division from all;
With crowds of illogical Christians, no doubt;
Till the rescuing earthquake cracked.
Thus are we man made firm;
Made warm by the numbers compact.
We follow no longer a trumpet-snout,
At a trot where the hog is tracked,
Nor wriggle the way of the worm.

Thou wilt spare us the cynical pout
At humanity: sign of a nature bechurled.
No stenchy anathemas cast
Upon Providence, women, the world.
Distinguish thy tempers and trim thy wits.
The purchased are things of the mart, not classed
Among resonant types that have freely grown.

Thy knowledge of women might be surpassed:
As any sad dog's of sweet flesh when he quits
The wayside wandering bone!
No revilings of comrades as ingrates: thee
The tempter, misleader, and criminal (screened
By laws yet barbarous) own.

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If some one performed Fiend's deputy,
He was for awhile the Fiend.
Still, nursing a passion to speak,
As the punch-bowl does, in the moral vein,
When the ladle has finished its leak,
And the vessel is loquent of nature's inane,
Hie where the demagogues roar
Like a Phalaris bull, with the victim's force:
Hurrah to their jolly attack
On a City that smokes of the Plain;
A city of sin's death-dyes,
Holding revel of worms in a corse;
A city of malady sore,
Over-ripe for the big doom's crack:
A city of hymnical snore;
Connubial truths and lies
Demanding an instant divorce,
Clean as the bright from the black.
It were well for thy system to sermonize.
There are giants to slay, and they call for their Jack.

Then up stand thou in the midst:
Thy good grain out of thee thresh,
Hand upon heart: relate
What things thou legally didst
For the Archseducer of flesh.
Omitting the murmurs of women and fate,
Confess thee an instrument armed
To be snare of our wanton, our weak,
Of all by the sensual charmed.
For once shall repentance be done by the tongue:
Speak, though execrate, speak
A word on grandmotherly Laws
Giving rivers of gold to our young,

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In the days of their hungers impure;
To furnish them beak and claws,
And make them a banquet's lure.

Thou the example, saved
Miraculously by this poor skin!
Thereat let the Purse be waved:
The snake-slough sick of the snaky sin:
A devil, if devil as devil behaved
Ever, thou knowest, look thou but in,
Where he shivers, a culprit fettered and shaved;
O a bird stripped of feather, a fish clipped of fin!

And commend for a washing the torrents of wrath,
Which hurl at the foe of the dearest men prize
Rough-rolling boulders and froth.
Gigantical enginery they can command,
For the crushing of enemies not of great size:
But hold to thy desperate stand.
Men's right of bequeathing their all to their own
(With little regard for the creatures they squeezed);
Their mill and mill-water and nether mill-stone
Tied fast to their infant; lo, this is the last
Of their hungers, by prudent devices appeased.
The law they decree is their ultimate slave;
Wherein we perceive old Voracity glassed.
It works from their dust, and it reeks of their grave.
Point them to greener, though Journals be guns;
To brotherly fields under fatherly skies;
Where the savage still primitive learns of a debt
He has owed since he drummed on his belly for war;
And how for his giving, the more will he get;
For trusting his fellows, leave friends round his sons:

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Till they see, with the gape of a startled surprise,
Their adored tyrant-monster a brute to abhor,
The sun of their system a father of flies!

So, for such good hope, take their scourge unashamed;
'Tis the portion of them who civilize,
Who speak the word novel and true:
How the brutish antique of our springs may be tamed,
Without loss of the strength that should push us to flower;
How the God of old time will act Satan of new,
If we keep him not straight at the higher God aimed;
For whose habitation within us we scour
This house of our life; where our bitterest pains
Are those to eject the Infernal, who heaps
Mire on the soul. Take stripes or chains;
Grip at thy standard reviled.
And what if our body be dashed from the steeps?
Our spoken in protest remains.
A young generation reaps.

The young generation! ah, there is the child
Of our souls down the Ages! to bleed for it, proof
That souls we have, with our senses filed,
Our shuttles at thread of the woof.
May it be braver than ours,
To encounter the rattle of hostile bolts,
To look on the rising of Stranger Powers.
May it know how the mind in expansion revolts
From a nursery Past with dead letters aloof,
And the piping to stupor of Precedents shun,
In a field where the forefather print of the hoof
Is not yet overgrassed by the watering hours,
And should prompt us to Change, as to promise of sun,
Till brain-rule splendidly towers.

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For that large light we have laboured and tramped
Thorough forests and bogland, still to perceive
Our animate morning stamped
With the lines of a sombre eve.

A timorous thing ran the innocent hind,
When the wolf was the hypocrite fang under hood,
The snake a lithe lurker up sleeve,
And the lion effulgently ramped.
Then our forefather hoof did its work in the wood,
By right of the better in kind.
But now will it breed yon bestial brood
Three-fold thrice over, if bent to bind,
As the healthy in chains with the sick,
Unto despot usage our issuing mind.
It signifies battle or death's dull knell.
Precedents icily written on high
Challenge the Tentatives hot to rebel.
Our Mother, who speeds her bloomful quick
For the march, reads which the impediment well.
She smiles when of sapience is their boast.
O loose of the tug between blood run dry
And blood running flame may our offspring run!
May brain democratic be king of the host!
Less then shall the volumes of History tell
Of the step in progression, the slip in relapse,
That counts us a sand-slack inch hard won
Beneath an oppressive incumbent perhaps.

Let the senile lords in a parchment sky,
And the generous turbulents drunken of morn,
Their battle of instincts put by,
A moment examine this field:
On a Roman street cast thoughtful eye,
Along to the mounts from the bog-forest weald.

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It merits a glance at our history's maps,
To see across Britain's old shaggy unshorn,
Through the Parties in strife internecine, foot
The ruler's close-reckoned direct to the mark.
From the head ran the vanquisher's orderly route,
In the stride of his forts through the tangle and dark.
From the head runs the paved firm way for advance,
And we shoulder, we wrangle! The light on us shed
Shows dense beetle blackness in swarm, lurid Chance,
The Goddess of gamblers, above. From the head,
Then when it worked for the birth of a star
Fraternal with heaven's in beauty and ray,
Sprang the Acropolis. Ask what crown
Comes of our tides of the blood at war,
For men to bequeath generations down!
And ask what thou wast when the Purse was brimmed:
What high-bounding ball for the Gods at play:
A Conservative youth! who the cream-bowl skimmed,
Desiring affairs to be left as they are.

So, thou takest Youth's natural place in the fray,
As a Tentative, combating Peace,
Our lullaby word for decay.—
There will come an immediate decree
In thy mind for the opposite party's decease,
If he bends not an instant knee.
Expunge it: extinguishing counts poor gain.
And accept a mild word of police:—
Be mannerly, measured; refrain
From the puffings of him of the bagpipe cheeks.
Our political, even as the merchant main,
A temperate gale requires
For the ship that haven seeks;
Neither God of the winds nor his bellowsy squires.

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Then observe the antagonist, con
His reasons for rocking the lullaby word.
You stand on a different stage of the stairs.
He fought certain battles, yon senile lord.
In the strength of thee, feel his bequest to his heirs.
We are now on his inches of ground hard won,
For a perch to a flight o'er his resting fence.

Does it knock too hard at thy head if I say,
That Time is both father and son?
Tough lesson, when senses are floods over sense!—
Discern the paternal of Now
As the Then of thy present tense.
You may pull as you will either way,
You can never be other than one.
So, be filial. Giants to slay
Demand knowing eyes in their Jack.

There are those whom we push from the path with respect.
Bow to that elder, though seeing him bow
To the backward as well, for a thunderous back
Upon thee. In his day he was not all wrong.
Unto some foundered zenith he strove, and was wrecked.
He scrambled to shore with a worship of shore.
The Future he sees as the slippery murk;
The Past as his doctrinal library lore.
He stands now the rock to the wave's wild wash.
Yet thy lumpish antagonist once did work
Heroical, one of our strong.
His gold to retain and his dross reject,
Engage him, but humour, not aiming to quash.
Detest the dead squat of the Turk,
And suffice it to move him along.

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Drink of faith in the brains a full draught
Before the oration: beware
Lest rhetoric moonily waft
Whither horrid activities snare.
Rhetoric, juice for the mob
Despising more luminous grape,
Oft at its fount has it laughed
In the cataracts rolling for rape
Of a Reason left single to sob!

'Tis known how the permanent never is writ
In blood of the passions: mercurial they,
Shifty their issue: stir not that pit
To the game our brutes best play.

But with rhetoric loose, can we check man's brute?
Assemblies of men on their legs invoke
Excitement for wholesome diversion: there shoot
Electrical sparks between their dry thatch
And thy waved torch, more to kindle than light.
'Tis instant between you: the trick of a catch
(To match a Batrachian croak)
Will thump them a frenzy or fun in their veins.
Then may it be rather the well-worn joke
Thou repeatest, to stop conflagration, and write
Penance for rhetoric. Strange will it seem,
When thou readest that form of thy homage to brains!

For the secret why demagogues fail,
Though they carry hot mobs to the red extreme,
And knock out or knock in the nail
(We will rank them as flatly sincere,
Devoutly detesting a wrong,
Engines o'ercharged with our human steam),

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Question thee, seething amid the throng.
And ask, whether Wisdom is born of blood-heat;
Or of other than Wisdom comes victory here;—
Aught more than the banquet and roundelay,
That is closed with a terrible terminal wail,
A retributive black ding-dong?
And ask of thyself: This furious Yea
Of a speech I thump to repeat,
In the cause I would have prevail,
For seed of a nourishing wheat,
Is it accepted of Song?
Does it sound to the mind through the ear,
Right sober, pure sane? has it disciplined feet?
Thou wilt find it a test severe;
Unerring whatever the theme.
Rings it for Reason a melody clear,
We have bidden old Chaos retreat;
We have called on Creation to hear;
All forces that make us are one full stream.
Simple islander! thus may the spirit in verse,
Showing its practical value and weight,
Pipe to thee clear from the Empty Purse,
Lead thee aloft to that high estate.—
The test is conclusive, I deem:
It embraces or mortally bites.
We have then the key-note for debate:
A Senate that sits on the heights
Over discords, to shape and amend.

And no singer is needed to serve
The musical God, my friend.
Needs only his law on a sensible nerve:
A law that to Measure invites,
Forbidding the passions contend.

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Is it accepted of Song?
And if then the blunt answer be Nay,
Dislink thee sharp from the ramping horde,
Slaves of the Goddess of hoar-old sway,
The Queen of delirious rites,
Queen of those issueless mobs, that rend
For frenzy the strings of a fruitful accord,
Pursuing insensate, seething in throng,
Their wild idea to its ashen end.
Off to their Phrygia, shriek and gong,
Shorn from their fellows, behold them wend!

But thou, should the answer ring Ay,
Hast warrant of seed for thy word:
The musical God is nigh
To inspirit and temper, tune it, and steer
Through the shoals: is it worthy of Song,
There are souls all woman to hear,
Woman to bear and renew.
For he is the Master of Measure, and weighs,
Broad as the arms of his blue,
Fine as the web of his rays,
Justice, whose voice is a melody clear,
The one sure life for the numbered long.
From him are the brutal and vain,
The vile, the excessive, out-thrust:
He points to the God on the upmost throne:
He is the saver of grain,
The sifter of spirit from dust.
He, Harmony, tells how to Measure pertain
The virilities: Measure alone
Has votaries rich in the male:
Fathers embracing no cloud,
Sowing no harvestless main:
Alike by the flesh and the spirit endowed

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To create, to perpetuate; woo, win, wed;
Send progeny streaming, have earth for their own,
Over-run the insensates, disperse with a puff
Simulacra, though solid they sail,
And seem such imperial stuff:
Yes, the living divide off the dead.

Then thou with thy furies outgrown,
Not as Cybele's beast will thy head lash tail
So præter-determinedly thermonous,
Nor thy cause be an Attis far fled.
Thou under stress of the strife
Shalt hear for sustainment supreme
The cry of the conscience of Life:
Keep the young generations in hail,
And bequeath them no tumbled house!

There hast thou the sacred theme,
Therein the inveterate spur,
Of the Innermost. See her one blink
In vision past eyeballs. Not thee
She cares for, but us. Follow her.
Follow her, and thou wilt not sink.
With thy soul the Life espouse:
This Life of the visible, audible, ring
With thy love tight about; and no death will be;
The name be an empty thing,
And woe a forgotten old trick:
And battle will come as a challenge to drink;
As a warrior's wound each transient sting.
She leads to the Uppermost link by link;
Exacts but vision, desires not vows.
Above us the singular number to see;
The plural warm round us; ourself in the thick,
A dot or a stop: that is our task;

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Her lesson in figured arithmetic,
For the letters of Life behind its mask;
Her flower-like look under fearful brows.

As for thy special case, O my friend, one must think
Massilia's victim, who held the carouse
For the length of a carnival year,
Knew worse: but the wretch had his opening choice.
For thee, by our law, no alternatives were:
Thy fall was assured ere thou camest to a voice.
He cancelled the ravaging Plague,
With the roll of his fat off the cliff.
Do thou with thy lean as the weapon of ink,
Though they call thee an angler who fishes the vague
And catches the not too pink,
Attack one as murderous, knowing thy cause
Is the cause of community. Iterate,
Iterate, iterate, harp on the trite:
Our preacher to win is the supple in stiff:
Yet always in measure, with bearing polite:
The manner of one that would expiate
His share in grandmotherly Laws,
Which do the dark thing to destroy,
Under aspect of water so guilelessly white
For the general use, by the devils befouled.

Enough, poor prodigal boy!
Thou hast listened with patience; another had howled.
Repentance is proved, forgiveness is earned.
And 'tis bony: denied thee thy succulent half
Of the parable's blessing, to swineherd returned:
A Sermon thy slice of the Scriptural calf!
By my faith, there is feasting to come,
Not the less, when our Earth we have seen
Beneath and on surface, her deeds and designs:

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Who gives us the man-loving Nazarene,
The martyrs, the poets, the corn and the vines.
By my faith in the head, she has wonders in loom;
Revelations, delights. I can hear a faint crow
Of the cock of fresh mornings, far, far, yet distinct;
As down the new shafting of mines,
A cry of the metally gnome.
When our Earth we have seen, and have linked
With the home of the Spirit to whom we unfold,
Imprisoned humanity open will throw
Its fortress gates, and the rivers of gold
For the congregate friendliness flow.
Then the meaning of Earth in her children behold:
Glad eyes, frank hands, and a fellowship real:
And laughter on lips, as the birds' outburst
At the flooding of light. No robbery then
The feast, nor a robber's abode the home,
For a furnished model of our first den!
Nor Life as a stationed wheel;
Nor History written in blood or in foam,
For vendetta of Parties in cursing accursed.
The God in the conscience of multitudes feel,
And we feel deep to Earth at her heart,
We have her communion with men,
New ground, new skies for appeal.
Yield into harness thy best and thy worst;
Away on the trot of thy servitude start,
Through the rigours and joys and sustainments of air.
If courage should falter, 'tis wholesome to kneel.
Remember that well, for the secret with some,
Who pray for no gift, but have cleansing in prayer,
And free from impurities tower-like stand.
I promise not more, save that feasting will come
To a mind and a body no longer inversed:
The sense of large charity over the land,

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Earth's wheaten of wisdom dispensed in the rough,
And a bell ringing thanks for a sustenance meal
Through the active machine: lean fare,
But it carries a sparkle! And now enough,
And part we as comrades part,
To meet again never or some day or soon.

Our season of drought is reminder rude:—
No later than yesternoon,
I looked on the horse of a cart,
By the wayside water-trough.
How at every draught of his bride of thirst
His nostrils widened! The sight was good:
Food for us, food, such as first
Drew our thoughts to earth's lowly for food.

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TO THE COMIC SPIRIT

Sword of Common Sense!—
Our surest gift: the sacred chain
Of man to man: firm earth for trust
In structures vowed to permanence:—
Thou guardian issue of the harvest brain!
Implacable perforce of just;
With that good treasure in defence,
Which is our gold crushed out of joy and pain
Since first men planted foot and hand was king:
Bright, nimble of the marrow-nerve
To wield thy double edge, retort
Or hold the deadlier reserve,
And through thy victim's weapon sting:
Thine is the service, thine the sport
This shifty heart of ours to hunt
Across its webs and round the many a ring
Where fox it is, or snake, or mingled seeds
Occasion heats to shape, or the poor smoke
Struck from a puff-ball, or the troughster's grunt;—
Once lion of our desert's trodden weeds;
And but for thy straight finger at the yoke,
Again to be the lordly paw,
Naming his appetites his needs,
Behind a decorative cloak:
Thou, of the highest, the unwritten Law
We read upon that building's architrave
In the mind's firmament, by men upraised
With sweat of blood when they had quitted cave
For fellowship, and rearward looked amazed,
Where the prime motive gapes a lurid jaw,

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Thou, soul of wakened heads, art armed to warn,
Restrain, lest we backslide on whence we sprang,
Scarce better than our dwarf beginning shoot,
Of every gathered pearl and blossom shorn;
Through thee, in novel wiles to win disguise,
Seen are the pits of the disruptor, seen
His rebel agitation at our root:
Thou hast him out of hawking eyes;
Nor ever morning of the clang
Young Echo sped on hill from horn
In forest blown when scent was keen
Off earthy dews besprinkling blades
Of covert grass more merrily rang
The yelp of chase down alleys green,
Forth of the headlong-pouring glades,
Over the dappled fallows wild away,
Than thy fine unaccented scorn
At sight of man's old secret brute,
Devout for pasture on his prey,
Advancing, yawning to devour;
With step of deer, with voice of flute,
Haply with visage of the lily flower.

Let the cock crow and ruddy morn
His handmaiden appear! Youth claims his hour.
The generously ludicrous
Espouses it. But see we sons of day,
On whom Life leans for guidance in our fight,
Accept the throb for lord of us;
For lord, for the main central light
That gives direction, not the eclipse;
Or dost thou look where niggard Age,
Demanding reverence for wrinkles, whips
A tumbled top to grind a wolf's worn tooth;—
Hoar despot on our final stage,

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In dotage of a stunted Youth;—
Or it may be some venerable sage,
Not having thee awake in him, compact
Of wisdom else, the breast's old tempter trips;
Or see we ceremonial state,
Robing the gilded beast, exact
Abjection, while the crackskull name of Fate
Is used to stamp and hallow printed fact;
A cruel corner lengthens up thy lips;
These are thy game wherever men engage:
These and, majestic in a borrowed shape,
The major and the minor potentate,
Creative of their various ape;—
The tiptoe mortals triumphing to write
Upon a perishable page
An inch above their fellows' height;—
The criers of foregone wisdom, who impose
Its slough on live conditions, much for the greed
Of our first hungry figure wide agape;—
Call up thy hounds of laughter to their run.
These, that would have men still of men be foes,
Eternal fox to prowl and pike to feed;
Would keep our life the whirly pool
Of turbid stuff dishonouring History;
The herd the drover's herd, the fool the fool,
Ourself our slavish self's infernal sun:
These are the children of the heart untaught
By thy quick founts to beat abroad, by thee
Untamed to tone its passions under thought,
The rich humaneness reading in thy fun.
Of them a world of coltish heels for school
We have; a world with driving wrecks bestrewn.

'Tis written of the Gods of human mould,
Those Nectar Gods, of glorious stature hewn

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To quicken hymns, that they did hear, incensed,
Satiric comments overbold,
From one whose part was by decree
The jester's; but they boiled to feel him bite.
Better for them had they with Reason fenced
Or smiled corrected! They in the great Gods' might
Their prober crushed, as fingers flea.
Crumbled Olympus when the sovereign sire
His fatal kick to Momus gave, albeit
Men could behold the sacred Mount aspire,
The Satirist pass by on limping feet.
Those Gods who saw the ejected laugh alight
Below had then their last of airy glee;
They in the cup sought Laughter's drownèd sprite,
Fed to dire fatness off uncurbed conceit.
Eyes under saw them waddle on their Mount,
And drew them down; to flattest earth they rolled.
This know we veritable. O Sage of Mirth!
Can it be true, the story men recount
Of the fall'n plight of the great Gods on earth?
How they being deathless, though of human mould,
With human cravings, undecaying frames,
Must labour for subsistence; are a band
Whom a loose-cheeked, wide-lipped gay cripple leads
At haunts of holiday on summer sand:
And lightly he will hint to one that heeds
Names in pained designation of them, names
Ensphered on blue skies and on black, which twirl
Our hearing madly from our seeing dazed,
Add Bacchus unto both; and he entreats
(His baby dimples in maternal chaps
Running wild labyrinths of line and curl)
Compassion for his masterful Trombone,
Whose thunder is the brass of how he blazed
Of old: for him of the mountain-muscle feats,

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Who guts a drum to fetch a snappish groan:
For his fierce bugler horning onset, whom
A truncheon-battered helmet caps. . . .
The creature is of earnest mien
To plead a sorrow darker than the tomb.
His Harp and Triangle, in tone subdued,
He names; they are a rayless red and white;
The dawn-hued libertine, the gibbous prude.
And, if we recognize his Tambourine,
He asks; exhausted names her: she has become
A globe in cupolas; the blowziest queen
Of overflowing dome on dome;
Redundancy contending with the tight,
Leaping the dam! He fondly calls, his girl,
The buxom tripper with the goblet-smile,
Refreshful. O but now his brows are dun,
Bunched are his lips, as when distilling guile,
To drop his venomous: the Dame of dames,
Flower of the world, that honey one,
She of the earthly rose in the sea-pearl,
To whom the world ran ocean for her kiss;
He names her, as a worshipper he names,
And indicates with a contemptuous thumb.
The lady meanwhile lures the mob, alike
Ogles the bursters of the horn and drum.
Curtain her close! her open arms
Have suckers for beholders: she to this?
For that she could not, save in fury, hear
A sharp corrective utterance flick
Her idle manners, for the laugh to strike
Beauty so breeding beauty, without peer
Above the snows, among the flowers? She reaps
This mouldy garner of the fatal kick?
Gross with the sacrifice of Circe-swarms,
Astarte of vile sweets that slay, malign,

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From Greek resplendent to Phoenician foul,
The trader in attractions sinks, all brine
To thoughts of taste; is 't love?—bark, dog! hoot, owl!
And she is blushless: ancient worship weeps.
Suicide Graces dangle down the charms
Sprawling like gourds on outer garden-heaps.
She stands in her unholy oily leer
A statue losing feature, weather-sick
Mid draggled creepers of twined ivy sere.
The curtain cried for magnifies to see!—
We cannot quench our one corrupting glance:
The vision of the rumour will not flee.
Doth the Boy own such Mother?—shoot his dart
To bring her, countless as the crested deeps,
Her subjects of the uncorrected heart?
False is that vision, shrieks the devotee;
Incredible, we echo; and anew
Like a far growling lightning-cloud it leaps.
Low humourist this leader seems; perchance
Pitched from his University career,
Adept at classic fooling. Yet of mould
Human those Gods were: deathless too:
On high they not as meditatives paced:
Prodigiously they did the deeds of flesh:
Descending, they would touch the lowest here:
And she, that lighted form of blue and gold,
Whom the seas gave, all earth, all earth embraced;
Exulting in the great hauls of her mesh;
Desired and hated, desperately dear;
Most human of them was. No more pursue!
Enough that the black story can be told.
It preaches to the eminently placed:
For whom disastrous wreckage is nigh due,
Paints omen. Truly they our throbber had;
The passions plumping, passions playing leech,

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Cunning to trick us for the day's good cheer.
Our uncorrected human heart will swell
To notions monstrous, doings mad
As billows on a foam-lashed beach;
Borne on the tides of alternating heats,
Will drug the brain, will doom the soul as well;
Call the closed mouth of that harsh final Power
To speak in judgement: Nemesis, the fell:
Of those bright Gods assembled, offspring sour;
The last surviving on the upper seats;
As with men Reason when their hearts rebel.

Ah, what a fruitless breeder is this heart,
Full of the mingled seeds, each eating each.
Not wiser of our mark than at the start,
It surges like the wrath-faced father Sea
To countering winds; a force blind-eyed,
On endless rounds of aimless reach;
Emotion for the source of pride,
The grounds of faith in fixity
Above our flesh; its cravings urging speech,
Inspiring prayer; by turns a lump
Swung on a time-piece, and by turns
A quivering energy to jump
For seats angelical: it shrinks, it yearns,
Loves, loathes; is flame or cinders; lastly cloud
Capping a sullen crater: and mankind
We see cloud-capped, an army of the dark,
Because of thy straight leadership declined;
At heels of this or that delusive spark:
Now when the multitudinous races press
Elbow to elbow hourly more,
A thickened host; when now we hear aloud
Life for the very life implore
A signal of a visioned mark;

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Light of the mind, the mind's discourse,
The rational in graciousness,
Thee by acknowledgement enthroned,
To tame and lead that blind-eyed force
In harmony of harness with the crowd,
For payment of their dues; as yet disowned,
Save where some dutiful lone creature, vowed
To holy work, deems it the heart's intent;
Or where a silken circle views it cowled,
The seeming figure of concordance, bent
On satiating tyrant lust
Or barren fits of sentiment.

Thou wilt not have our paths befouled
By simulation; are we vile to view,
The heavens shall see us clean of our own dust,
Beneath thy breezy flitting wing:
They make their mirror upon faces true;
And where they win reflection, lucid heave
The under tides of this hot heart seen through.
Beneficently wilt thou clip
All oversteppings of the plumed,
The puffed, and bid the masker strip,
And into the crowned windbag thrust,
Tearing the mortal from the vital thing,
A lightning o'er the half-illumed,
Who to base brute-dominion cleave,
Yet mark effects, and shun the flash,
Till their drowsed wits a beam conceive,
To spy a wound without a gash,
The magic in a turn of wrist,
And how are wedded heart and head regaled
When Wit o'er Folly blows the mort,
And their high note of union spreads
Wide from the timely word with conquest charged;

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Victorious laughter, of no loud report,
If heard; derision as divinely veiled
As terrible Immortals in rose-mist,
Given to the vision of arrested men:
Whereat they feel within them weave
Community its closer threads,
And are to our fraternal state enlarged;
Like warm fresh blood is their enlivened ken:
They learn that thou art not of alien sort,
Speaking the tongue by vipers hissed,
Or of the frosty heights unscaled,
Or of the vain who simple speech distort,
Or of the vapours pointing on to nought
Along cold skies; though sharp and high thy pitch:
As when sole homeward the belated treads,
And hears aloft a clamour wailed,
That once had seemed the broomstick witch
Horridly violating cloud for drought:
He, from the rub of minds dispersing fears,
Hears migrants marshalling their midnight train;
Homeliest order in black sky appears,
Not less than in the lighted village steads.
So do those half-illumed wax clear to share
A cry that is our common voice; the note
Of fellowship upon a loftier plane,
Above embattled castle-wall and moat;
And toning drops as from pure heaven it sheds.
So thou for washing a phantasmal air,
For thy sweet singing keynote of the wise,
Laughter—the joy of Reason seeing fade
Obstruction into Earth's renewing beds,
Beneath the stroke of her good servant's blade—
Thenceforth art as their earth-star hailed;
Gain of the years, conjunction's prize.
The greater heart in thy appeal to heads

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They see, thou Captain of our civil Fort!
By more elusive savages assailed
On each ascending stage; untired
Both inner foe and outer to cut short,
And blow to chaff pretenders void of grist:
Showing old tiger's claws, old crocodile's
Yard-grin of eager grinders, slim to sight,
Like forms in running water, oft when smiles,
When pearly tears, when fluent lips delight:
But never with the slayer's malice fired:
As little as informs an infant's fist
Clenched at the sneeze! Thou wouldst but have us be
Good sons of mother soil, whereby to grow
Branching on fairer skies, one stately tree;
Broad of the tilth for flowering at the Court:
Which is the tree bound fast to wave its tress;
Of strength controlled sheer beauty to bestow.
Ambrosial heights of possible acquist,
Where souls of men with soul of man consort,
And all look higher to new loveliness
Begotten of the look: thy mark is there;
While on our temporal ground alive,
Rightly though fearfully thou wieldest sword
Of finer temper now a numbered learn
That they resisting thee themselves resist;
And not thy bigger joy to smite and drive,
Prompt the dense herd to butt, and set the snare
Witching them into pitfalls for hoarse shouts.
More now, and hourly more, and of the Lord
Thou lead'st to, doth this rebel heart discern,
When pinched ascetic and red sensualist
Alternately recurrent freeze or burn,
And of its old religions it has doubts.
It fears thee less when thou hast shown it bare;
Less hates, part understands, nor much resents,

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When the prized objects it has raised for prayer,
For fitful prayer;—repentance dreading fire,
Impelled by aches; the blindness which repents
Like the poor trampled worm that writhes in mire;—
Are sounded by thee, and thou darest probe
Old institutions and establishments,
Once fortesses against the floods of sin,
For what their worth; and questioningly prod
For why they stand upon a racing globe,
Impeding blocks, less useful than the clod;
Their angel out of them, a demon in.

This half-enlightened heart, still doomed to fret,
To hurl at vanities, to drift in shame
Of gain or loss, bewailing the sure rod,
Shall of predestination wed thee yet.
Something it gathers of what things should drop
At entrance on new times; of how thrice broad
The world of minds communicative; how
A straggling Nature classed in school, and scored
With stripes admonishing, may yield to plough
Fruitfullest furrows, nor for waxing tame
Be feeble on an Earth whose gentler crop
Is its most living, in the mind that steers,
By Reason led, her way of tree and flame,
Beyond the genuflexions and the tears;
Upon an Earth that cannot stop,
Where upward is the visible aim,
And ever we espy the greater God,
For simple pointing at a good adored:
Proof of the closer neighbourhood. Head on,
Sword of the many, light of the few! untwist
Or cut out tangles till fair space is won
Beyond a briared wood of austere brow,
Relieved of discord by thy timely word

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At intervals refreshing life: for thou
Art verily Keeper of the Muse's Key;
Thyself no vacant melodist;
On lower land elective even as she;
Holding, as she, all dissonance abhorred;
Advising to her measured steps in flow;
And teaching how for being subjected free
Past thought of freedom we may come to know
The music of the meaning of Accord.

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YOUTH IN MEMORY

Days, when the ball of our vision
Had eagles that flew unabashed to sun;
When the grasp on the bow was decision,
And arrow and hand and eye were one;
When the Pleasures, like waves to a swimmer,
Came heaving for rapture ahead!—
Invoke them, they dwindle, they glimmer
As lights over mounds of the dead.

Behold the winged Olympus, off the mead,
With thunder of wide pinions, lightning speed,
Wafting the shepherd-boy through ether clear,
To bear the golden nectar-cup.
So flies desire at view of its delight,
When the young heart is tiptoe perched on sight.
We meanwhile who in hues of the sick year
The Spring-time paint to prick us for our lost,
Mount but the fatal half way up—
Whereon shut eyes! This is decreed,
For Age that would to youthful heavens ascend,
By passion for the arms' possession tossed,
It falls the way of sighs and hath their end;
A spark gone out to more sepulchral night.
Good if the arrowy eagle of the height
Be then the little bird that hops to feed.

Lame falls the cry to kindle days
Of radiant orb and daring gaze.
It does but clank our mortal chain.
For Earth reads through her felon old

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The many-numbered of her fold,
Who forward tottering backward strain,
And would be thieves of treasure spent,
With their grey season soured.
She could write out their history in their thirst
To have again the much devoured,
And be the bud at burst;
In honey fancy join the flow,
Where Youth swims on as once they went,
All choiric for spontaneous glee
Of active eager lungs and thews;
They now bared roots beside the river bent,
Whose privilege themselves to see;
Their place in yonder tideway know;
The current glass peruse;
The depths intently sound;
And sapped by each returning flood
Accept for monitory nourishment
Those worn roped features under crust of mud,
Reflected in the silvery smooth around:
Not less the branching and high singing tree,
A home of nests, a landmark and a tent,
Until their hour for losing hold on ground.
Even such good harvest of the things that flee
Earth offers her subjected, and they choose
Rather of Bacchic Youth one beam to drink,
And warm slow marrow with the sensual wink.
So block they at her source the Mother of the Muse.

Who cheerfully the little bird becomes,
Without a fall, and pipes for peck at crumbs,
May have her dolings to the lightest touch;
As where some cripple muses by his crutch,
Unwitting that the spirit in him sings:
'When I had legs, then had I wings,

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As good as any born of eggs,
To feed on all aërial things,
When I had legs!'
And if not to embrace he sighs,
She gives him breath of Youth awhile,
Perspective of a breezy mile,
Companionable hedgeways, lifting skies;
Scenes where his nested dreams upon their hoard
Brooded, or up to empyrean soared:
Enough to link him with a dotted line.
But cravings for an eagle's flight,
To top white peaks and serve wild wine
Among the rosy undecayed,
Bring only flash of shade
From her full throbbing breast of day in night.
By what they crave are they betrayed:
And cavernous is that young dragon's jaw,
Crimson for all the fiery reptile saw
In time now coveted, for teeth to flay,
Once more consume, were Life recurrent May.
They to their moment of drawn breath,
Which is the life that makes the death,
The death that makes ethereal life would bind:
The death that breeds the spectre do they find.
Darkness is wedded and the waste regrets
Beating as dead leaves on a fitful gust,
By souls no longer dowered to climb
Beneath their pack of dust,
Whom envy of a lustrous prime,
Eclipsed while yet invoked, besets,
And dooms to sink and water sable flowers,
That never gladdened eye or loaded bee.
Strain we the arms for Memory's hours,
We are the seized Persephone.

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Responsive never to the soft desire
For one prized tune is this our chord of life.
'Tis clipped to deadness with a wanton knife,
In wishes that for ecstasies aspire.
Yet have we glad companionship of Youth,
Elysian meadows for the mind,
Dare we to face deeds done, and in our tomb
Filled with the parti-coloured bloom
Of loved and hated, grasp all human truth
Sowed by us down the mazy paths behind.
To feel that heaven must we that hell sound through:
Whence comes a line of continuity,
That brings our middle station into view,
Between those poles; a novel Earth we see,
In likeness of us, made of banned and blest;
The sower's bed, but not the reaper's rest:
An Earth alive with meanings, wherein meet
Buried, and breathing, and to be.
Then of the junction of the three,
Even as a heart in brain, full sweet
May sense of soul, the sum of music, beat.

Only the soul can walk the dusty track
Where hangs our flowering under vapours black,
And bear to see how these pervade, obscure,
Quench recollection of a spacious pure.
They take phantasmal forms, divide, convolve,
Hard at each other point and gape,
Horrible ghosts! in agony dissolve,
To reappear with one they drape
For criminal, and, Father! shrieking name,
Who such distorted issue did beget.
Accept them, them and him, though hiss thy sweat
Off brow on breast, whose furnace flame
Has eaten, and old Self consumes.

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Out of the purification will they leap,
Thee renovating while new light illumes
The dusky web of evil, known as pain,
That heavily up healthward mounts the steep;
Our fleshly road to beacon-fire of brain:
Midway the tameless oceanic brute
Below, whose heave is topped with foam for fruit,
And the fair heaven reflecting inner peace
On righteous warfare, that asks not to cease.

Forth of such passage through black fire we win
Clear hearing of the simple lute,
Whereon, and not on other, Memory plays
For them who can in quietness receive
Her restorative airs: a ditty thin
As note of hedgerow bird in ear of eve,
Or wave at ebb, the shallow catching rays
On a transparent sheet, where curves a glass
To truer heavens than when the breaker neighs
Loud at the plunge for bubbly wreck in roar.
Solidity and bulk and martial brass,
Once tyrants of the senses, faintly score
A mark on pebbled sand or fluid slime,
While present in the spirit, vital there,
Are things that seemed the phantoms of their time;
Eternal as the recurrent cloud, as air
Imperative, refreshful as dawn-dew.
Some evanescent hand on vapour scrawled
Historic of the soul, and heats anew
Its coloured lines where deeds of flesh stand bald.
True of the man, and of mankind 'tis true.
Did we stout battle with the Shade, Despair,
Our cowardice, it blooms; or haply warred
Against the primal beast in us, and flung;
Or cleaving mists of Sorrow, left it starred

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Above self-pity slain: or it was Prayer
First taken for Life's cleanser; or the tongue
Spake for the world against this heart; or rings
Old laughter, from the founts of wisdom sprung;
Or clap of wing of joy, that was a throb
From breast of Earth, and did no creature rob:
These quickening live. But deepest at her springs,
Most filial, is an eye to love her young.
And had we it, to see with it, alive
Is our lost garden, flower, bird and hive.
Blood of her blood, aim of her aim, are then
The green-robed and grey-crested sons of men:
She tributary to her aged restores
The living in the dead; she will inspire
Faith homelier than on the Yonder shores,
Abhorring these as mire,
Uncertain steps, in dimness gropes,
With mortal tremours pricking hopes,
And, by the final Bacchic of the lusts
Propelled, the Bacchic of the spirit trusts:
A fervour drunk from mystic hierophants;
Not utterly misled, though blindly led,
Led round fermenting eddies. Faith she plants
In her own firmness as our midway road:
Which rightly Youth has read, though blindly read;
Her essence reading in her toothsome goad;
Spur of bright dreams experience disenchants.
But love we well the young, her road midway
The darknesses runs consecrated clay.
Despite our feeble hold on this green home,
And the vast outer strangeness void of dome,
Shall we be with them, of them, taught to feel,
Up to the moment of our prostrate fall,
The life they deem voluptuously real
Is more than empty echo of a call,

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Or shadow of a shade, or swing of tides;
As brooding upon age, when veins congeal,
Grey palsy nods to think. With us for guides,
Another step above the animal,
To views in Alpine thought are they helped on.
Good if so far we live in them when gone!

And there the arrowy eagle of the height
Becomes the little bird that hops to feed,
Glad of a crumb, for tempered appetite
To make it wholesome blood and fruitful seed.
Then Memory strikes on no slack string,
Nor sectional will varied Life appear:
Perforce of soul discerned in mind, we hear
Earth with her Onward chime, with Winter Spring.
And ours the mellow note, while sharing joys
No more subjecting mortals who have learnt
To build for happiness on equipoise,
The Pleasures read in sparks of substance burnt;
Know in our seasons an integral wheel,
That rolls us to a mark may yet be willed.
This, the truistic rubbish under heel
Of all the world, we peck at and are filled.

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PENETRATION AND TRUST

I

Sleek as a lizard at round of a stone,
The look of her heart slipped out and in.
Sweet on her lord her soft eyes shone,
As innocents clear of a shade of sin.

II

He laid a finger under her chin,
His arm for her girdle at waist was thrown.
Now, what will happen and who will win,
With me in the fight and my lady lone?

III

He clasped her, clasping a shape of stone;
Was fire on her eyes till they let him in.
Her breast to a God of the daybeams shone,
And never a corner for serpent sin.

IV

Tranced she stood, with a chattering chin;
Her shrunken form at his feet was thrown:
At home to the death my lord shall win,
When it is no tyrant who leaves me lone!

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NIGHT OF FROST IN MAY

With splendour of a silver day,
A frosted night had opened May:
And on that plumed and armoured night,
As one close temple hove our wood,
Its border leafage virgin white.
Remote down air an owl hallooed.
The black twig dropped without a twirl;
The bud in jewelled grasp was nipped;
The brown leaf cracked a scorching curl;
A crystal off the green leaf slipped.
Across the tracks of rimy tan,
Some busy thread at whiles would shoot;
A limping minnow-rillet ran,
To hang upon an icy foot.

In this shrill hush of quietude,
The ear conceived a severing cry.
Almost it let the sound elude,
When chuckles three, a warble shy,
From hazels of the garden came,
Near by the crimson-windowed farm.
They laid the trance on breath and frame,
A prelude of the passion-charm.

Then soon was heard, not sooner heard
Than answered, doubled, trebled, more,
Voice of an Eden in the bird
Renewing with his pipe of four

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The sob: a troubled Eden, rich
In throb of heart: unnumbered throats
Flung upward at a fountain's pitch
The fervour of the four long notes,
That on the fountain's pool subside,
Exult and ruffle and upspring:
Endless the crossing multiplied
Of silver and of golden string.
There chimed a bubbled underbrew
With witch-wild spray of vocal dew.

It seemed a single harper swept
Our wild wood's inner chords and waked
A spirit that for yearning ached
Ere men desired and joyed or wept.
Or now a legion ravishing
Musician rivals did unite
In love of sweetness high to sing
The subtle song that rivals light;
From breast of earth to breast of sky:
And they were secret, they were nigh:
A hand the magic might disperse;
The magic swung my universe.

Yet sharpened breath forbade to dream,
Where all was visionary gleam;
Where Seasons, as with cymbals, clashed;
And feelings, passing joy and woe,
Churned, gurgled, spouted, interflashed,
Nor either was the one we know:
Nor pregnant of the heart contained
In us were they, that griefless plained,
That plaining soared; and through the heart
Struck to one note the wide apart:—

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A passion surgent from despair;
A paining bliss in fervid cold;
Off the last vital edge of air,
Leap heavenward of the lofty-souled,
For rapture of a wine of tears;
As had a star among the spheres
Caught up our earth to some mid-height
Of double life to ear and sight,
She giving voice to thought that shines
Keen-brilliant of her deepest mines;
While steely drips the rillet clinked,
And hoar with crust the cowslip swelled.

Then was the lyre of earth beheld,
Then heard by me: it holds me linked;
Across the years to dead-ebb shores
I stand on, my blood-thrill restores.
But would I conjure into me
Those issue notes, I must review
What serious breath the woodland drew;
The low throb of expectancy;
How the white mother-muteness pressed
On leaf and meadow-herb; how shook,
Nigh speech of mouth, the sparkle-crest
Seen spinning on the bracken-crook.

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THE TEACHING OF THE NUDE

I

A SATYR spied a Goddess in her bath,
Unseen of her attendant nymphs; none knew.
Forthwith the creature to his fellows drew,
And looking backward on the curtained path,
He strove to tell; he could but heave a breast
Too full, and point to mouth, with failing leers:
Vainly he danced for speech, he giggled tears,
Made as if torn in two, as if tight pressed,
As if cast prone; then fetching whimpered tunes
For words, flung heel and set his hairy flight
Through forest-hollows, over rocky height.
The green leaves buried him three rounds of moons.
A senatorial Satyr named what herb
Had hurried him outrunning reason's curb.

II

'Tis told how when that hieaway unchecked
To dell returned, he seemed of tempered mood:
Even as the valley of the torrent rude,
The torrent now a brook, the valley wrecked.
In him, to hale him high or hurl aheap,
Goddess and Goatfoot hourly wrestled sore;
Hourly the immortal prevailing more:
Till one hot noon saw Meliboeus peep
From thicket-sprays to where his full-blown dame,

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In circle by the lusty friskers gripped,
Laughed the showered rose-leaves while her limbs were stripped.
She beckoned to our Satyr, and he came.
Then twirled she mounds of ripeness, wreath of arms.
His hoof kicked up the clothing for such charms.

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BREATH OF THE BRIAR

I

O BRIAR-SCENTS, on yon wet wing
Of warm South-west wind brushing by,
You mind me of the sweetest thing
That ever mingled frank and shy:
When she and I, by love enticed,
Beneath the orchard-apples met,
In equal halves a ripe one sliced,
And smelt the juices ere we ate.

II

That apple of the briar-scent,
Among our lost in Britain now,
Was green of rind, and redolent
Of sweetness as a milking cow.
The briar gives it back, well nigh
The damsel with her teeth on it;
Her twinkle between frank and shy,
My thirst to bite where she had bit.

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EMPEDOCLES

I

He leaped. With none to hinder,
Of Aetna's fiery scoriae
In the next vomit-shower, made he
A more peculiar cinder.
And this great Doctor, can it be,
He left no saner recipe
For men at issue with despair?
Admiring, even his poet owns,
While noting his fine lyric tones,
The last of him was heels in air!

II

Comes Reverence, her features
Amazed to see high Wisdom hear,
With glimmer of a faunish leer,
One mock her pride of creatures.
Shall such sad incident degrade
A stature casting sunniest shade?
O Reverence! let Reason swim;
Each life its critic deed reveals;
And him reads Reason at his heels,
If heels in air the last of him!

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ENGLAND BEFORE THE STORM

I

THE day that is the night of days,
With cannon-fire for sun ablaze,
We spy from any billow's lift;
And England still this tidal drift!
Would she to sainted forethought vow
A space before the thunders flood,
That martyr of its hour might now
Spare her the tears of blood.

II

Asleep upon her ancient deeds,
She hugs the vision plethora breeds,
And counts her manifold increase
Of treasure in the fruits of peace.
What curse on earth's improvident,
When the dread trumpet shatters rest,
Is wreaked, she knows, yet smiles content
As cradle rocked from breast.

III

She, impious to the Lord of Hosts,
The valour of her offspring boasts,
Mindless that now on land and main
His heeded prayer is active brain.
No more great heart may guard the home,
Save eyed and armed and skilled to cleave
Yon swallower wave with shroud of foam,
We see not distant heave.

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IV

They stand to be her sacrifice,
The sons this mother flings like dice,
To face the odds and brave the Fates;
As in those days of starry dates,
When cannon cannon's counterblast
Awakened, muzzle muzzle bowled,
And high in swathe of smoke the mast
Its fighting rag outrolled.

1891.

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TARDY SPRING

Now the North wind ceases,
The warm South-west awakes;
Swift fly the fleeces,
Thick the blossom-flakes.

Now hill to hill has made the stride,
And distance waves the without end:
Now in the breast a door flings wide;
Our farthest smiles, our next is friend.
And song of England's rush of flowers
Is this full breeze with mellow stops,
That spins the lark for shine, for showers;
He drinks his hurried flight, and drops.
The stir in memory seem these things,
Which out of moistened turf and clay
Astrain for light push patient rings,
Or leap to find the waterway.
'Tis equal to a wonder done,
Whatever simple lives renew
Their tricks beneath the father sun,
As though they caught a broken clue:
So hard was earth an eyewink back;
But now the common life has come,
The blotting cloud a dappled pack,
The grasses one vast underhum.
A City clothed in snow and soot,
With lamps for day in ghostly rows,
Breaks to the scene of hosts afoot,
The river that reflective flows:

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And there did fog down crypts of street
Play spectre upon eye and mouth:—
Their faces are a glass to greet
This magic of the whirl for South.
A burly joy each creature swells
With sound of its own hungry quest;
Earth has to fill her empty wells,
And speed the service of the nest;
The phantom of the snow-wreath melt,
That haunts the farmer's look abroad,
Who sees what tomb a white night built,
Where flocks now bleat and sprouts the clod.
For iron Winter held her firm;
Across her sky he laid his hand;
And bird he starved, he stiffened worm;
A sightless heaven, a shaven land.
Her shivering Spring feigned fast asleep,
The bitten buds dared not unfold:
We raced on roads and ice to keep
Thought of the girl we love from cold.

But now the North wind ceases,
The warm South-west awakes,
The heavens are out in fleeces,
And earth's green banner shakes.

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THE LABOURER

For a Heracles in his fighting ire there is never the glory that follows
When ashen he lies and the poets arise to sing of the work he has done.
But to vision alive under shallows of sight, lo, the Labourer's crown is Apollo's,
While stands he yet in his grime and sweat—to wrestle for fruits of the Sun.

Can an enemy wither his cheer? Not you, ye fair yellow-flowering ladies,
Who join with your lords to jar the chords of a bosom heroic, and clog.
'Tis the faltering friend, an inanimate land, may drag a great soul to their Hades,
And plunge him far from a beam of star till he hears the deep bay of the Dog.

Apparition is then of a monster-task, in a policy carving new fashions:
The winninger course than the rule of force, and the springs lured to run in a stream:
He would bend tough oak, he would stiffen the reed, point Reason to swallow the passions,
Bid Britons awake two steps to take where one is a trouble extreme!

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Not the less is he nerved with the Labourer's resolute
hope: that by him shall be written,
To honour his race, this deed of grace, for the weak
from the strong made just:
That her sons over seas in a rally of praise may behold a
thrice vitalised Britain,
Ashine with the light of the doing of right: at the
gates of the Future in trust.

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FORESIGHT AND PATIENCE

Sprung of the father blood, the mother brain,
Are they who point our pathway and sustain.
They rarely meet; one soars, one walks retired.
When they do meet, it is our earth inspired.

To see Life's formless offspring and subdue
Desire of times unripe, we have these two,
Whose union is right reason: join they hands,
The world shall know itself and where it stands;
What cowering angel and what upright beast
Make man, behold, nor count the low the least,
Nor less the stars have round it than its flowers.
When these two meet, a point of time is ours.

As in a land of waterfalls, that flow
Smooth for the leap on their great voice below,
Some eddies near the brink borne swift along
Will capture hearing with the liquid song,
So, while the headlong world's imperious force
Resounded under, heard I these discourse.

First words, where down my woodland walk she led,
To her blind sister Patience, Foresight said:

—Your faith in me appals, to shake my own,
When still I find you in this mire alone.

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—The few steps taken at a funeral pace
By men had slain me but for those you trace.

—Look I once back, a broken pinion I:
Black as the rebel angels rained from sky!

—Needs must you drink of me while here you live,
And make me rich in feeling I can give.

—A brave To-be is dawn upon my brow:
Yet must I read my sister for the How.
My daisy better knows her God of beams
Than doth an eagle that to mount him seems.
She hath the secret never fieriest reach
Of wing shall master till men hear her teach.

—Like the clod flaked by the driving plough,
My semblance when I have you not as now.
The quiet creatures who escape mishap
Bear likeness to pure growths of the green sap:
A picture of the settled peace desired
By cowards shunning strife or strivers tired.
I listen at their breasts: is there no jar
Of wrestlings and of stranglings, dead they are,
And such a picture as the piercing mind
Ranks beneath vegetation. Not resigned
Are my true pupils while the world is brute.
What edict of the stronger keeps me mute,
Stronger impels the motion of my heart.
I am not Resignation's counterpart.
If that I teach, 'tis little the dry word,
Content, but how to savour hope deferred.
We come of earth, and rich of earth may be;
Soon carrion if very earth are we!

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The coursing veins, the constant breath, the use
Of sleep, declare that strife allows short truce;
Unless we clasp decay, accept defeat,
And pass despised; 'a-cold for lack of heat,'
Like other corpses, but without death's plea.

—My sister calls for battle; is it she?

—Rather a world of pressing men in arms,
Than stagnant, where the sensual piper charms
Each drowsy malady and coiling vice
With dreams of ease whereof the soul pays price!
No home is here for peace while evil breeds,
While error governs, none; and must the seeds
You sow, you that for long have reaped disdain,
Lie barren at the doorway of the brain,
Let stout contention drive deep furrows, blood
Moisten, and make new channels of its flood!

—My sober little maid, when we meet first,
Drinks of me ever with an eager thirst.
So can I not of her till circumstance
Drugs cravings. Here we see how men advance
A doubtful foot, but circle if much stirred,
Like dead weeds on whipped waters. Shout the word
Prompting their hungers, and they grandly march,
As to band-music under Victory's arch.
Thus was it, and thus is it; save that then
The beauty of frank animals had men.

—Observe them, and down rearward for a term,
Gaze to the primal twistings of the worm.
Thence look this way, across the fields that show
Men's early form of speech for Yes and No.

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My sister a bruised infant's utterance had;
And issuing stronger, to mankind 'twas mad.
I knew my home where I had choice to feel
The toad beneath a harrow or a heel.

—Speak of this Age.

—When you it shall discern
Bright as you are, to me the Age will turn.

—For neither of us has it any care;
Its learning is through Science to despair.

—Despair lies down and grovels, grapples not
With evil, casts the burden of its lot.
This Age climbs earth.

—To challenge heaven.

—Not less
The lower deeps. It laughs at Happiness!
That know I, though the echoes of it wail,
For one step upward on the crags you scale.
Brave is the Age wherein the word will rust,
Which means our soul asleep or body's lust,
Until from warmth of many breasts, that beat
A temperate common music, sunlike heat
The happiness not predatory sheds!

—But your fierce Yes and No of butting heads
Now rages to outdo a horny Past.
Shades of a wild Destroyer on the vast
Are thrown by every novel light upraised.
The world's whole round smokes ominously, amazed

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And trembling as its pregnant Aetna swells.
Combustibles on hot combustibles
Run piling, for one spark to roll in fire
The mountain-torrent of infernal ire
And leave the track of devils where men built.
Perceptive of a doom, the sinner's guilt
Confesses in a cry for help shrill loud,
If drops the chillness of a passing cloud,
To conscience, reason, human love; in vain:
None save they but the souls which them contain.
No extramural God, the God within
Alone gives aid to city charged with sin.
A world that for the spur of fool and knave
Sweats in its laboratory what shall save?
But men who ply their wits in such a school
Must pray the mercy of the knave and fool.

—Much have I studied hard Necessity!
To know her Wisdom's mother, and that we
May deem the harshness of her later cries
In labour a sure goad to prick the wise,
If men among the warnings which convulse
Can gravely dread without the craven's pulse.
Long ere the rising of this age of ours,
The knave and fool were stamped as monstrous Powers.
Of human lusts and lassitudes they spring,
And are as lasting as the parent thing.
Yet numbering locust hosts, bent they to drill,
They might o'ermatch and have mankind at will.
Behold such army gathering; ours the spur,
No scattered foe to face, but Lucifer.
Not fool or knave is now the enemy
O'ershadowing men, 'tis Folly, Knavery!
A sea; nor stays that sea the bastioned beach.
Now must the brother soul alive in each

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His traitorous individual devildom
Hold subject lest the grand destruction come.
Dimly men see it menacing apace
To overthrow, perchance uproot, the race.
Within, without, they are a field of tares:
Fruitfuller for them when the contest squares,
And wherefore warrior service they must yield,
Shines visible as life on either field.
That is my comfort, following shock on shock,
Which sets faith quaking on their firmest rock.
Since with his weapons, all the arms of Night,
Frail men have challenged Lucifer to fight,
Have matched in hostile ranks, enrolled, erect,
The human and Satanic intellect,
Determined for their uses to control
What forces on the earth and under roll,
Their granite rock runs igneous; now they stand
Pledged to the heavens for safety of their land.
They cannot learn save grossly, gross that are:
Through fear they learn whose aid is good in war.

—My sister, as I read them in my glass,
Their field of tares they take for pasture grass.
How waken them that have not any bent
Save browsing—the concrete indifferent!
Friend Lucifer supplies them solid stuff:
They fear not for the race when full the trough.
They have much fear of giving up the ghost;
And these are of mankind the unnumbered host.

—If I could see with you, and did not faint
In beating wing, the future I would paint.
Those massed indifferents will learn to quake:
Now meanwhile is another mass awake,

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Once denser than the grunters of the sty.
If I could see with you! Could I but fly!

—The length of days that you with them have housed,
An outcast else, approves their cause espoused.

—O true, they have a cause, and woe for us,
While still they have a cause too piteous!
Yet, happy for us when, their cause defined,
They walk no longer with a stumbler blind,
And quicken in the virtue of their cause,
To think me a poor mouther of old saws!
I wait the issue of a battling Age;
The toilers with your 'troughsters' now engage;
Instructing them, through their acutest sense,
How close the dangers of indifference!
Already have my people shown their worth,
More love they light, which folds the love of Earth.
That love to love of labour leads: thence love
Of humankind—earth's incense flung above.

—Admit some other features: Faithless, mean;
Encased in matter; vowed to Gods obscene;
Contemptuous of the impalpable, it swells
On Doubt; for pastime swallows miracles;
And if I bid it face what *I* observe,
Declares me hoodwinked by my optic nerve!

—Oft has your prophet, for reward of toil,
Seen nests of seeming cockatrices coil:
Disowned them as the unholiest of Time,
Which were his offspring, born of flame on slime.
Nor him, their sire, have known the filial fry:
As little as Time's earliest knew the sky.

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Perchance among them shoots a lustrous flame
At intervals, in proof of whom they came.
To strengthen our foundations is the task
Of this tough Age; not in your beams to bask,
Though, lighted by your beams, down mining caves
The rock it blasts, the hoarded foulness braves.
My sister sees no round beyond her mood;
To hawk this Age has dressed her head in hood.
Out of the course of ancient ruts and grooves,
It moves: O much for me to say it moves!
About his Æthiop Highlands Nile is Nile,
Though not the stream of the paternal smile:
And where his tide of nourishment he drives,
An Abyssinian wantonness revives.
Calm as his lotus-leaf to-day he swims;
He is the yellow crops, the rounded limbs,
The Past yet flowing, the fair time that fills;
Breath of all mouths and grist of many mills.
To-morrow, warning none with tempest-showers,
He is the vast Insensate who devours
His golden promise over leagues of seed,
Then sits in a smooth lake upon the deed.
The races which on barbarous force begin
Inherit onward of their origin,
And cancelled blessings will the current length
Reveal till they know need of shaping strength.
'Tis not in men to recognize the need
Before they clash in hosts, in hosts they bleed.
Then may sharp suffering their nature grind;
Of rabble passions grow the chieftain Mind.
Yet mark where still broad Nile boasts thousands fed,
For tens up the safe mountains at his head.
Few would be fed, not far his course prolong,
Save for the troublous blood which makes him strong.

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—That rings of truth! More do your people thrive;
Your Many are more merrily alive
Than erewhile when I gloried in the page
Of radiant singer and anointed sage.
Greece was my lamp: burnt out for lack of oil;
Rome, Python Rome, prey of its robber spoil!
All structures built upon a narrow space
Must fall, from having not your hosts for base.
O thrice must one be you, to see them shift
Along their desert flats, here dash, there drift;
With faith, that of privations and spilt blood,
Comes Reason armed to clear or bank the flood!
And thrice must one be you, to wait release
From duress in the swamp of their increase.
At which oppressive scene, beyond arrest,
A darkness not with stars of heaven dressed
Philosophers behold; desponding view
Your Many nourished, starved my brilliant few;
Then flinging heels, as charioteers the reins,
Dive down the fumy Ætna of their brains.
Belated vessels on a rising sea,
They seem: they pass!

—But not Philosophy!

—Ay, be we faithful to ourselves: despise
Nought but the coward in us! That way lies
The wisdom making passage through our slough.
Am I not heard, my head to Earth shall bow;
Like her, shall wait to see, and seeing wait.
Philosophy is Life's one match for Fate.
That photosphere of our high fountain One,
Our spirit's Lord and Reason's fostering sun,
Philosophy, shall light us in the shade,
Warm in the frost, make Good our aim and aid.

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Companioned by the sweetest, ay renewed,
Unconquerable, whose aim for aid is Good!
Advantage to the Many: that we name
God's voice; have there the surety in our aim.
This thought unto my sister do I owe,
And irony and satire off me throw.
They crack a childish whip, drive puny herds,
Where numbers crave their sustenance in words.
Now let the perils thicken: clearer seen,
Your Chieftain Mind mounts over them serene.
Who never yet of scattered lamps was born
To speed a world, a marching world to warn,
But sunward from the vivid Many springs,
Counts conquest but a step, and through disaster sings.

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THE WARNING

We have seen mighty men ballooning high,
And in another moment bump the ground.
He falls; and in his measurement is found
To count some inches o'er the common fry.
'Twas not enough to send him climbing sky,
Yet 'twas enough above his fellows crowned,
Had he less panted. Let his faithful hound
Bark at detractors. He may walk or lie.
Concerns it most ourselves, who with our gas—
This little Isle's insatiable greed
For Continents—filled to inflation burst.
So do ripe nations into squalor pass,
When, driven as herds by their old private thirst,
They scorn the brain's wild search for virtuous light.

OUTSIDE THE CROWD

To sit on History in an easy chair,
Still rivalling the wild hordes by whom 'twas writ!
Sure, this beseems a race of laggard wit,
Unwarned by those plain letters scrawled on air.
If more than hands' and armsful be our share,
Snatch we for substance we see vapours flit.
Have we not heard derision infinite
When old men play the youth to chase the snare?
Let us be belted athletes, matched for foes,
Or stand aloof, the great Benevolent,
The Lord of Lands no Robber-birds annex,
Where Justice holds the scales with pure intent;
Armed to support her sword;—lest we compose
That Chapter for the historic word on Wrecks.

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TRAFALGAR DAY

He leads: we hear our Seaman's call
In the roll of battles won;
For he is Britain's Admiral
Till setting of her sun.

When Britain's life was in her ships,
He kept the sea as his own right;
And saved us from more fell eclipse
Than drops on day from blackest night.
Again his battle spat the flame!
Again his victory flag men saw!
At sound of Nelson's chieftain name,
A deeper breath did Freedom draw.

Each trusty captain knew his part:
They served as men, not marshalled kine:
The pulses they of his great heart,
With heads to work his main design.
Their Nelson's word, to beat the foe,
And spare the fall'n, before them shone.
Good was the hour of blow for blow,
And clear their course while they fought on.

Behold the Envied vanward sweep!—
A day in mourning weeds adored!
Then Victory was wrought to weep;
Then sorrow crowned with laurel soared.

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A breezeless flag above a shroud
All Britain was when wind and wave,
To make her, passing human, proud,
Brought his last gift from o'er the grave!

Uprose the soul of him a star
On that brave day of Ocean days:
It rolled the smoke from Trafalgár
To darken Austerlitz ablaze.
Are we the men of old, its light
Will point us under every sky
The path he took; and must we fight,
Our Nelson be our battle-cry!

He leads: we hear our Seaman's call
In the roll of battles won;
For he is Britain's Admiral
Till setting of her sun.

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ODES IN CONTRIBUTION TO THE SONG OF FRENCH HISTORY

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THE REVOLUTION

I

Nor yet had History's Aetna smoked the skies,
And low the Gallic Giantess lay enchained,
While overhead in ordered set and rise
Her kingly crowns immutably defiled;
Effulgent on funereal piled
Across the vacant heavens, and distrained
Her body, mutely, even as earth, to bear;
Despoiled the tomb of hope, her mouth of air.

II

Through marching scores of winters racked she lay,
Beneath a hoar-frost's brilliant crust,
Whereon the jewelled flies that drained
Her breasts disported in a glistering spray;
She, the land's fount of fruits, enclosed with dust;
By good and evil angels fed, sustained
In part to curse, in part to pray,
Sucking the dubious rumours, till men saw
The throbs of her charged heart before the Just,
So worn the harrowed surface had become:
And still they deemed the dance above was Law,
Amort all passion in a rebel dumb.

III

Then, on the unanticipated day,
Earth heaved, and rose a veinous mound

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To roar of the underfloods; and off it sprang,
Ravishing as red wine in woman's form,
A splendid Maenad, she of the delirious laugh,
Her body twisted flames with the smoke-cap crowned;
She of the Bacchic foot; the challenger to the fray,
Bewitchment for the embrace; who sang, who sang
Intoxication to her swarm,
Revolved them, hair, voice, feet, in her carmagnole,
As with a stroke she snapped the Royal staff,
Dealt the awaited blow on gilt decay
(O ripeness of the time! O Retribution sure,
If but our vital lamp illumine us to endure!)
And, like a glad releasing of her soul,
Sent the word Liberty up to meet the midway blue,
Her bridegroom in descent to her; and they joined,
In the face of men they joined: attest it true,
The million witnesses, that she,
For ages lying beside the mole,
Was on the unanticipated miracle day
Upraised to midway heaven and, as to her goal,
Enfolded, ere the Immaculate knew
What Lucifer of the Mint has coined
His bride's adulterate currency
Of burning love corrupt of an infuriate hate;
She worthy, she unworthy; that one day his mate:
His mate for that one day of the unwritten deed.
Read backward on the hoar-frost's brilliant crust;
Beneath it read.
Athirst to kiss, athirst to slay, she stood,
A radiance fringed with grim affright;
For them that hungered, she was nourishing food,
For those who sparkled, Night.
Read in her heart, and how before the Just
Her doings, her misdoings, plead.

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IV

Down on her leap for him the young Angelical broke
To husband a resurgent France:
From whom, with her dethroning stroke,
Dishonour passed; the dalliance,
That is occasion's yea or nay,
In issues for the soul to pay,
Discarded; and the cleft 'twixt deed and word,
The sinuous lie which warbles the sweet bird,
Wherein we see old Darkness peer,
Cold Dissolution beck, she had flung hence;
And hence the talons and the beak of prey;
Hence all the lures to silken swine
Thronging the troughs of indolence;
With every sleek convolvement serpentine;
The pride in elfin arts to veil an evil leer,
And bid a goatfoot trip it like a fay.
He clasped in this revived, uprisen France,
A valorous dame, of countenance
The lightning's upon cloud: unlit as yet
On brows and lips the lurid shine
Of seas in the night-wind's whirl; unstirred
Her pouch of the centuries' injuries compressed;
The shriek that tore the world as yet unheard:
Earth's animate full flower she looked, intense
For worship, wholly given him, fair
Adoring or desiring; in her bright jet,
Earth's crystal spring to sky: Earth's warrior Best
To win Heaven's Pure up that midway
We vision for new ground, where sense
And spirit are one for the further flight; breast-bare,
Bare-limbed; nor graceless gleamed her disarray
In scorn of the seductive insincere,
But martially nude for hot Bellona's play,
And amorous of the loftiest in her view.

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V

She sprang from dust to drink of earth's cool dew,
The breath of swaying grasses share,
Mankind embrace, their weaklings rear,
At wrestle with the tyrannic strong;
Her forehead clear to her mate, virgin anew,
As immortals may be in the mortal sphere.
Read through her launching heart, who had lain long
With Earth and heard till it became her own
Our good Great Mother's eve and matin song:
The humming burden of Earth's toil to feed
Her creatures all, her task to speed their growth,
Her aim to lead them up her pathways, shown
Between the Pains and Pleasures; warned of both,
Of either aided on their hard ascent.
Now when she looked, with love's benign delight
After great ecstasy, along the plains,
What foulest impregnation of her sight
Fransformed the scene to multitudinous troops
Of human sketches, quaver-figures, bent,
As were they winter sedges, broken hoops,
Dry udders, vineless poles, worm-eaten posts,
With features like the flowers defaced by deluge rains?
Recked she that some perverting devil had limned
Earth's proudest to spout scorn of the Maker's hand,
Who could a day behold these deathly hosts,
And see, decked, graced and delicately trimmed,
A ribanded and gemmed elected few,
Sanctioned, of milk and honey starve the land:—
Like melody in flesh, its pleasant game
Olympianwise perform, cloak but the shame:
Beautiful statures; hideous,
By Christian contrast; pranked with golden chains,
And flexile where is manhood straight;
Mortuaries where warm should beat

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The brotherhood that keeps blood sweet:
Who dared in cantique impious
Proclaim the Just, to whom was due
Cathedral gratitude in the pomp of state,
For that on those lean outcasts hung the sucker Pains,
On these elect the swelling Pleasures grew.
Surely a devil's land when that meant death for each!
Fresh from the breast of Earth, not thus,
With all the body's life to plump the leech,
Is Nature's way, she knew. The abominable scene
Spat at the skies; and through her veins,
To cloud celestially sown,
Ran venom of what nourishment
Her dark sustainer subterrene
Supplied her, stretched supine on the rack,
Alive in the shrewd nerves, the seething brains,
Under derisive revels, prone
As one clamped fast, with the interminable senseless blent.

VI

Now was her face white waves in the tempest's sharp flame-blink;
Her skies shot black.
Now was it visioned infamy to drink
Of earth's cool dew, and through the vines
Frolic in pearly laughter with her young,
Watching the healthful, natural, happy signs
Where hands of lads and maids like tendrils clung,
After their sly shy ventures from the leaf,
And promised bunches. Now it seemed
The world was one malarious mire,
Crying for purification: chief
This land of France. It seemed
A duteous desire
To drink of life's hot flood, and the crimson streamed.

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VII

She drank what makes man demon at the draught.
Her skies lowered black,
Her lover flew,
There swept a shudder over men.
Her heavenly lover fled her, and she laughed,
For laughter was her spirit's weapon then.
The Infernal rose uncalled, he with his crew.

VIII

As mighty thews burst manacles, she went mad:
Her heart a flaring torch usurped her wits.
Such enemies of her next-drawn breath she had!
To tread her down in her live grave beneath
Their dancing floor sunned blind by the Royal wreath,
They ringed her steps with crafty prison pits.
Without they girdled her, made nest within.
There ramped the lion, here entrailed the snake.
They forced the cup to her lips when she drank blood;
Believing it, in the mother's mind at strain,
In the mother's fears, and in young Liberty's wail
Alarmed, for her encompassed children's sake,
The sole sure way to save her priceless bud.
Wherewith, when power had gifted her to prevail,
Vengeance appeared as logically akin.
Insanely rational they; she rationally insane;
And in compute of sin, was hers the appealing sin.

IX

Amid the plash of scarlet mud
Stained at the mouth, drunk with our common air,
Not lack of love was her defect;
The Fury mourned and raged and bled for France;
Breathing from exultation to despair
At every wild-winged hope struck by mischance

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Soaring at each faint gleam o'er her abyss.
Heard still, to be heard while France shall stand erect,
The frontier march she piped her sons, for where
Her crouching outer enemy camped,
Attendant on the deadlier inner's hiss.
She piped her sons the frontier march, the wine
Of martial music, History's cherished tune;
And they, the saintliest labourers that aye
Dropped sweat on soil for bread, took arms and tramped;
High-breasted to match men or elements,
Or Fortune, harsh schoolmistress with the undrilled:
War's ragged pupils; many a wavering line,
Torn from the dear fat soil of champaigns hopefully tilled,
Torn from the motherly bowl, the homely spoon,
To jest at famine, ply
The novel scythe, and stand to it on the field;
Lie in the furrows, rain-clouds for their tents;
Fronting the red artillery straighten spine;
Buckle the shiver at sight of comrades strewn;
Over an empty platter affect the merrily filled;
Die, if the multiple hazards around said die;
Downward measure a foeman mightily sized;
Laugh at the legs that would run for a life despised;
Lyrical on into death's red roaring jaw-gape, steeled
Gaily to take of the foe his lesson, and give reply.
Cheerful apprentices, they shall be masters soon!

X

Lo, where hurricane flocks of the North-wind rattle their thunder
Loud through a night, and at dawn comes change to the great South-west,
Hounds are the hounded in clouds, waves, forests, inverted the race:

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Lo, in the day's young beams the colossal invading pursuers
Burst upon rocks and were foam;
Ridged up a torrent crest;
Crumbled to ruin, still gazing a glacial wonder;
Turned shamed feet toe to heel on their track at a panic pace.
Yesterday's clarion cock scudded hen of the invalid comb;
They, the triumphant tonant towering upper, were under;
They, violators of home, dared hope an inviolate home;
They that had stood for the stroke were the vigorous hewers;
Quick as the trick of the wrist with the rapier, they the pursuers.
Heavens and men amazed heard the arrogant crying for grace;
Saw the once hearth-reek rabble the scourge of an army dispieced;
Saw such a shift of the hunt as when Titan Olympus clomb.
Fly! was the sportsman's word; and the note of the quarry rang, Chase!

XI

Banners from South, from East,
Sheaves of pale banners drooping hole and shred;
The captive brides of valour, Sabine Wives
Plucked from the foeman's blushful bed,
For glorious muted battle-tongues
Of deeds along the horizon's red,
At cost of unreluctant lives;
Her toilful heroes homeward poured,
To give their fevered mother air of the lungs.

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She breathed, and in the breathing craved.
Environed as she was, at bay,
Safety she kissed on her drawn sword,
And waved for victory, for fresh victory waved:
She craved for victory as her daily bread;
For victory as her daily banquet raved.

XII

Now had her glut of vengeance left her grey
Of blood, who in her entrails fiercely tore
To clutch and squeeze her snakes; herself the more
Devitalizing: red was her Auroral ray;
Desired if but to paint her pallid hue.
The passion for that young horizon red,
Which dowered her with the flags, the blazing fame,
Like dotage of the past-meridian dame
For some bright Sungod adolescent, swelled
Insatiate, to the voracious grew,
The glutton's inward raveners bred;
Till she, mankind's most dreaded, most abhorred,
Witless in her demands on Fortune, asked,
As by the weaving Fates impelled,
To have the thing most loathed, the iron lord,
Controller and chastiser, under Victory masked.

XIII

Banners from East, from South,
She hugged him in them, feared the scourge they meant,
Yet blindly hugged, and hungering built his throne.
So may you see the village innocent,
With curtsey of shut lids and open mouth,
In act to beg for sweets expect a loathly stone:
See furthermore the Just in his measures weigh
Her sufferings and her sins, dispense her meed.
False to her bridegroom lord of the miracle day,

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She fell: from his ethereal home observed
Through love, grown alien love, not moved to plead
Against the season's fruit for deadly Seed,
But marking how she had aimed, and where she swerved,
Why suffered, with a sad consenting thought.
Nor would he shun her sullen look, nor monstrous hold
The doer of the monstrous; she aroused,
She, the long tortured, suddenly freed, distraught,
More strongly the divine in him than when
Joy of her as she sprang from mould
Drew him the midway heavens adown
To clasp her in his arms espoused
Before the sight of wondering men,
And put upon the day a deathless crown.
The veins and arteries of her, fold in fold,
His alien love laid open, to divide
The martyred creature from her crimes; he knew
What cowardice in her valour could reside;
What strength her weakness covered; what abased
Sublimity so illumining, and what raised
This wallower in old slime to noblest heights,
Up to the union on the midway blue:—
Day that the celestial grave Recorder hangs
Among dark History's nocturnal lights,
With vivid beams indicative to the quick
Of all who have felt the vaulted body's pangs
Beneath a mind in hopeless soaring sick.
She had forgot how long enslaved, she yearned
To the one helping hand above;
Forgot her faith in the Great Undiscerned,
Whereof she sprang aloft to her Angelical love
That day: and he, the bright day's husband, still with love,
Though alien, though to an upper seat retired,
Beheld a wrangling heart, as 'twere her soul

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On eddies of wild waters cast;
In wilderness division; fired
For domination, freedom, lust,
The Pleasures; lo, a witch's snaky bowl
Set at her lips; the blood-drinker's madness fast
Upon her; and therewith mistrust,
Most of herself: a mouth of guile.
Compassionately could he smile,
To hear the mouth disclaiming God,
And clamouring for the Just!
Her thousand impulses, like torches, coursed
City and field; and pushed abroad
O'er hungry waves to thirsty sands,
Flaring at further; she had grown to be
The headless with the fearful hands;
To slaughter, else to suicide, enforced.
But he, remembering how his love began,
And of what creature, pitied when was plain
Another measure of captivity:
The need for strap and rod;
The penitential prayers again;
Again the bitter bowing down to dust;
The burden on the flesh for who disclaims the God,
The answer when is call upon the Just.
Whence her lost virtue had found refuge strode
Her master, saying, 'I only; I who can!'
And echoed round her army, now her chain.
So learns the nation, closing Anarch's reign,
That she had been in travail of a Man.

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NAPOLÉON

I

CANNON his name,
Cannon his voice, he came.
Who heard of him heard shaken hills,
An earth at quake, to quiet stamped;
Who looked on him beheld the will of wills,
The driver of wild flocks where lions ramped:
Beheld War's liveries flee him, like lumped grass
Nid-nod to ground beneath the cuffing storm;
While laurelled over his Imperial form,
Forth from her bearded tube of lacquey brass,
Reverberant notes and long blew volant Fame.
Incarnate Victory, Power manifest,
Infernal or God-given to mankind,
On the quenched volcano's cusp did he take stand,
A conquering army's height above the land,
Which calls that army offspring of its breast,
And sees it mid the starry camps enshrined;
His eye the cannon's flame,
The cannon's cave his mind.

II

To weld the nation in a name of dread,
And scatter carrion flies off wounds unhealed,
The Necessitated came, as comes from out
Electric ebon lightning's javelin-head,
Threatening annihilation in the revealed
Founts of our being; terrible with doubt,

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With radiance restorative. At one stride
Athwart the Law he stood for sovereign sway.
That Soliform made featureless beside
His brilliancy who neighboured: vapour they;
Vapour what postured statues barred his tread.
On high in amphitheatre field on field,
Italian, Egyptian, Austrian,
Far heard and of the carnage discord clear,
Bells of his escalading triumphs pealed
In crashes on a choral chant severe,
Heraldic of the authentic Charlemagne,
Globe, sceptre, sword, to enfold, to rule, to smite,
Make unity of the mass,
Coherent or refractory, by his might.

Forth from her bearded tube of lacquey brass,
Fame blew, and tuned the jangles, bent the knees
Rebellious or submissive; his decrees
Were thunder in those heavens and compelled:
Such as disordered earth, eclipsed of stars,
Endures for sign of Order's calm return,
Whereunto she is vowed; and his wreckage-spars,
His harried ships, old riotous Ocean lifts alight,
Subdued to spendour in his delirant churn.
Glory suffused the accordant, quelled,
By magic of high sovereignty, revolt:
And he, the reader of men, himself unread;
The name of hope, the name of dread;
Bloom of the coming years or blight;
An arm to hurl the bolt
With aim Olympian; bore
Likeness to Godhead. Whither his flashes hied
Hosts fell; what he constructed held rock-fast.
So did earth's abjects deem of him that built and clove.

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Torch on imagination, beams he cast,
Whereat they hailed him deified:
If less than an eagle-speeding Jove, than Vulcan more.
Or it might be a Vulcan-Jove,
Europe for smithy, Europe's floor
Lurid with sparks in evanescent showers,
Loud echo-clap of hammers at all hours,
Our skies the reflex of its furnace blast.

III

On him the long enchained, released
For bride of the miracle day up the midway blue;
She from her heavenly lover fallen to serve for feast
Of rancours and raw hungers; she, the untrue,
Yet pitiable, not despicable, gazed.
Fawning, her body bent, she gazed
With eyes the moonstone portals to her heart:
Eyes magnifying through hysteric tears
This apparition, ghostly for belief;
Demoniac or divine, but sole
Over earth's mightiest written Chief;
Earth's chosen, crowned, unchallengeable upstart:
The trumpet word to awake, transform, renew;
The arbiter of circumstance;
High above limitations, as the spheres.
Nor ever had heroical Romance,
Never ensanguined History's lengthened scroll,
Shown fulminant to shoot the levin dart
Terrific as this man, by whom upraised,
Aggrandized and begemmed, she outstripped her peers;
Like midnight's levying brazier-beacon blazed
Defiant to the world, a rally for her sons,

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Day of the darkness; this man's mate; by him,
Cannon his name,
Rescued from vivisectionist and knave,
Her body's dominators and her shame;
By him with the rivers of ranked battalions, brave
Past mortal, girt: a march of swords and guns
Incessant; his proved warriors; loaded dice
He flung on the crested board, where chilly Fears
Behold the Reaper's ground, Death sitting grim,
Awatch for his predestined ones,
Mid shrieks and torrent-hooves; but these,
Inebriate of his unevitable device,
Hail it their hero's wood of lustrous laurel-trees,
Blossom and fruit of fresh Hesperides,
The boiling life-blood in their cheers.
Unequalled since the world was man they pour
A spiky girdle round her; these, her sons,
His cataracts at smooth holiday, soon to roar
Obstruction shattered at his will or whim:
Kind to her ear as quiring Cherubim,
And trampling earth like scornful mastodons.

IV

The flood that swept her to be slave
Adoring under thought of being his mate,
These were, and unto the visibly unexcelled,
As much of heart as abjects can she gave,
Or what of heart the body bears for freight
When Majesty apparent overawes;
By the flash of his ascending deeds upheld,
Which let not feminine pride in him have pause
To question where the nobler pride rebelled.
She read the hieroglyphic on his brow,
Felt his firm hand to wield the giant's mace;

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Herself whirled upward in an eagle's claws,
Past recollection of her earthly place;
And if cold Reason pressed her, called him Fate;
Offering abashed the servile woman's vow.
Delirium was her virtue when the look
At fettered wrists and violated laws
Faith in a rectitude Supernal shook,
Till worship of him shone as her last rational state,
The slave's apology for gemmed disgrace.
Far in her mind that leap from earth to the ghost
Midway on high; or felt as a troubled pool;
Or as a broken sleep that hunts a dream half lost,
Arrested and rebuked by the common school
Of daily things for truancy. She could rejoice
To know with wakeful eyeballs Violence
Her crowned possessor, and, on every sense
Incumbent, Fact, Imperial Fact, her choice,
In scorn of barren visions, aims at a glassy void.
Who sprang for Liberty once, found slavery sweet;
And Tyranny, an alert subservience buoyed,
Spurred a blood-mare immeasurably fleet
To shoot the transient leagues in a passing wink,
Prompt for the glorious bound at the fanged abyss's
brink.
Scarce felt she that she bled when battle scored
On riddled flags the further conjured line;
From off the meteor gleam of his waved sword
Reflected bright in permanence: she bled
As the Bacchante spills her challengeing wine
With whirl o' the cup before the kiss to lip;
And bade drudge History in his footprints tread,
For pride of sword-strokes o'er slow penmanship:
Each step of his a volume: his sharp word
The shower of steel and lead
Or pastoral sunshine.

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V

Persistent through the brazen chorus round
His thunderous footsteps on the foeman's ground,
A broken carol of wild notes was heard,
As when an ailing infant wails a dream.
Strange in familiarity it rang:
And now along the dark blue vault might seem
Winged migratories having but heaven for home,
Now the lone sea-bird's cry down shocks of foam,
Beneath a ruthless paw the captive's pang.

It sang the gift that comes from God
To mind of man as air to lung.
So through her days of under sod
Her faith unto her heart had sung,
Like bedded seed by frozen clod,
With view of wide-armed heaven and buds at burst,
And midway up, Earth's fluttering little lyre.
Even for a glimpse, for even a hope in chained desire
The vision of it watered thirst.

VI

But whom those errant moans accused
As Liberty's murderous mother, cried accursed,
France blew to deafness: for a space she mused;
She smoothed a startled look, and sought,
From treasuries of the adoring slave,
Her surest way to strangle thought;
Picturing her dread lord decree advance
Into the enemy's land; artillery, bayonet, lance;
His ordering fingers point the dial's to time their ranks:
Himself the black storm-cloud, the tempest's bayonet-glaive.
Like foam-heads of a loosened freshet bursting banks,

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By mount and fort they thread to swamp the sluggard plains.
Shines his gold-laurel sun, or cloak connivent rains.
They press to where the hosts in line and square throng mute;
He watchful of their form, the Audacious, the Astute;
Eagle to grip the field; to work his craftiest, fox.
From his brief signal, straight the stroke of the leveller falls;
From him those opal puffs, those arcs with the clouded balls:
He waves, and the voluble scene is a quagmire shifting blocks;
They clash, they are knotted, and now 'tis the deed of the axe on the log;
Here away moves a spiky woodland, and yon away sweep
Rivers of horse torrent-mad to the shock, and the heap over heap
Right through the troughed black lines turned to bunches or shreds, or a fog
Rolling off sunlight's arrows. Not mightier Phœbus in ire,
Nor deadlier Jove's avengeing right hand, than he of the brain
Keen at an enemy's mind to encircle and pierce and constrain,
Muffling his own for a fate-charged blow very Gods may admire.
Sure to behold are his eagles on high where the conflict raged.
Rightly, then, should France worship, and deafen the disaccord
Of those who dare withstand an irresistible sword
To thwart his predestined subjection of Europe. Let them submit!

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She said it aloud, and heard in her breast, as a singer caged,
With the beat of wings at bars, Earth's fluttering little lyre.
No more at midway heaven, but liker midway to the pit:
Not singing the spirally upward of rapture, the downward of pain
Rather, the drop sheer downward from pressure of merciless weight.

Her strangled thought got breath, with her worship held debate;
To yield and sink, yet eye askant the mark she had missed.
Over the black-blue rollers of that broad Westerly main,
Steady to sky, the light of Liberty glowed
In a flaming pillar, that cast on the troubled waters a road
For Europe to cross, and see the thing lost subsist.
For there 'twas a shepherd led his people, no butcher of sheep;
Firmly there the banner he first upreared
Stands to rally; and nourishing grain do his children reap
From a father beloved in life, in his death revered.
Contemplating him and his work, shall a skyward glance
Clearer sight of our dreamed and abandoned obtain;
Nay, but as if seen in station above the Republic, France
Had view of her one-day's heavenly lover again;
Saw him mid the bright host looking down on her; knew she had erred,
Knew him her judge, knew yonder the spirit preferred;
Yonder the base of the summit she strove that day to ascend,
Ere cannon mastered her soul, and all dreams had end.

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VII

Soon felt she in her shivered frame
A bodeful drain of blood illume
Her wits with frosty fire to read
The dazzling wizard who would have her bleed
On fruitless marsh and snows of spectral gloom
For victory that was victory scarce in name.
Husky his clarions laboured, and her sighs
O'er slaughtered sons were heavier than the prize;
Recalling how he stood by Frederic's tomb,
With Frederic's country underfoot and spurned:
There meditated; till her hope might guess,
Albeit his constant star prescribe success,
The savage strife would sink, the civil aim
To head a mannered world breathe zephyrous
Of morning after storm; whereunto she yearned;
And Labour's lovely peace, and Beauty's courtly bloom,
The mind in strenuous tasks hilarious.
At such great height, where hero hero topped,
Right sanely should the Grand Ascendant think
No further leaps at the fanged abyss's brink
True Genius takes: be battle's dice-box dropped!

She watched his desert features, hung to hear
The honey words desired, and veiled her face;
Hearing the Seaman's name recur
Wrathfully, thick with a meaning worse
Than call to the march: for that inveterate Purse
Could kindle the extinct, inform a vacant place,
Conjure a heart into the trebly felled.
It squeezed the globe, insufferably swelled
To feed insurgent Europe: rear and van
Were haunted by the amphibious curse;

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Here flesh, there phantom, livelier after rout:
The Seaman piping aye to the rightabout,
Distracted Europe's Master, puffed remote
Those Indies of the swift Macedonian,
Whereon would Europe's Master somewhiles doat,
In dreamings on a docile universe
Beneath an immarcessible Charlemagne.

Nor marvel France should veil a seer's face,
And call on darkness as a blest retreat.
Magnanimously could her iron Emperor
Confront submission: hostile stirred to heat
All his vast enginery, allowed no halt
Up withered avenues of waste-blood war,
To the pitiless red mounts of fire afume,
As 'twere the world's arteries opened! Woe the race!
Ask wherefore Fortune's vile caprice should balk
His panther spring across the foaming salt,
From martial sands to the cliffs of pallid chalk!
There is no answer: seed of black defeat
She then did sow, and France nigh unto death foredoom.
See since that Seaman's epicycle sprite
Engirdle, lure and goad him to the chase
Along drear leagues of crimson spotting white
With mother's tears of France, that he may meet
Behind suborned battalions, ranked as wheat
Where peeps the weedy poppy, him of the sea;
Earth's power to baffle Ocean's power resume;
Victorious army crown o'er Victory's fleet;
And bearing low that Seaman upon knee,
Stay the vexed question of supremacy,
Obnoxious in the vault by Frederic's tomb.

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VIII

Poured streams of Europe's veins the flood
Full Rhine or Danube rolls off morning-tide
Through shadowed reaches into crimson-dyed:
And Rhine and Danube knew her gush of blood
Down the plucked roots the deepest in her breast.
He tossed her cordials, from his laurels pressed.
She drank for dryness thirstily, praised his gifts.
The blooded frame a powerful draught uplifts
Writhed the devotedness her voice rang wide
In cries ecstatic, as of the martyr-Blest,
Their spirits issuing forth of bodies racked,
And crazy chuckles, with life's tears at feud;
While near her heart the sunken sentinel
Called Critic marked, and dumb in awe reviewed
This torture, this anointed, this untracked
To mortal source, this alien of his kind;
Creator, slayer, conjuror, Solon-Mars,
The cataract of the abyss, the star of stars;
Whose arts to lay the senses under spell
Aroused an insurrectionary mind.

IX

He, did he love her? France was his weapon, shrewd
At edge, a wind in onset: he loved well
His tempered weapon, with the which he hewed
Clean to the ground impediments, or hacked,
Sure of the blade that served the great man-miracle.
He raised her, robed her, gemmed her for his bride,
Did but her blood in blindness given exact.
Her blood she gave, was blind to him as guide:
She quivered at his word, and at his touch
Was hound or steed for any mark he espied.
He loved her more than little, less than much.

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The fair subservient of Imperial Fact
Next to his consanguineous was placed
In ranked esteem; above the diurnal meal,
Vexatious carnal appetites above,
Above his hoards, while she Imperial Fact embraced,
And rose but at command from under heel.
The love devolvent, the ascension love,
Receptive or profuse, were fires he lacked,
Whose marrow had expelled their wasteful sparks;
Whose mind, the vast machine of endless haste,
Took up but solids for its glowing seal.
The hungry love, that fish-like creatures feel,
Impelled for prize of hooks, for prey of sharks,
His night's first quarter sicklied to distaste,
In warm enjoyment barely might distract.
A head that held an Europe half devoured
Taste in the blood's conceit of pleasure soured.
Nought save his rounding aim, the means he plied,
Death for his cause, to him could point appeal.
His mistress was the thing of uses tried.
Frigid the netting smile on whom he wooed,
But on his Policy his eye was lewd.
That sharp long zig-zag into distance brooked
No foot across; a shade his ire provoked.
The blunder or the cruelty of a deed
His Policy imperative could plead.
He deemed nought other precious, nor knew he
Legitimate outside his Policy.
Men's lives and works were due, from their birth's date,
To the State's shield and sword, himself the State.
He thought for them in mass, as Titan may;
For their pronounced well-being bade obey;
O'er each obstructive thicket thunderclapped,
And straight their easy road to market mapped.

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Watched Argus to survey the huge preserves
He held or coveted; Mars was armed alert
At sign of motion; yet his brows were murk,
His gorge would surge, to see the butcher's work,
The Reaper's field; a sensitive in nerves.
He rode not over men to do them hurt.
As one who claimed to have for paramour
Earth's fairest form, he dealt the cancelling blow;
Impassioned, still impersonal; to ensure
Possession; free of rivals, not their foe.

The common Tyrant's frenzies, rancour, spites,
He knew as little as men's claim on rights.
A kindness for old servants, early friends,
Was constant in him while they served his ends;
And if irascible, 'twas the moment's reek
From fires diverted by some gusty freak.
His Policy the act which breeds the act
Previsèd, in issues accurately summed
From reckonings of men's tempers, terrors, needs:—
That universal army, which he leads
Who builds Imperial on Imperious Fact.
Within his hot brain's hammering workshop hummed
A thousand furious wheels at whirr, untired
As Nature in her reproductive throes;
And did they grate, he spake, and cannon fired:
The cause being aye the incendiary foes
Proved by prostration culpable. His dispense
Of Justice made his active conscience;
His passive was of ceaseless labour formed.
So found this Tyrant sanction and repose;
Humanly just, inhumanly unwarmed.

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Preventive fencings with the foul intent
Occult, by him observed and foiled betimes,
Let fool historians chronicle as crimes.
His blows were dealt to clear the way he went:
Too busy sword and mind for needless blows.
The mighty bird of sky minutest grains
On ground perceived; in heaven but rays or rains;
In humankind diversities of masks,
For rule of men the choice of bait or goads.
The statesman steered the despot to large tasks;
The despot drove the statesman on short roads.
For Order's cause he laboured, as inclined
A soldier's training and his Euclid mind.
His army unto men he could present
As model of the perfect instrument.
That creature, woman, was the sofa soft,
When warriors their dusty armour doffed,
And read their manuals for the making truce
With rosy frailties framed to reproduce.
He farmed his land, distillingly alive
For the utmost extract he might have and hive,
Wherewith to marshal force; and in like scheme,
Benign shone Hymen's torch on young love's dream.
Thus to be strong was he beneficent;
A fount of earth, likewise a firmament.

The disputant in words his eye dismayed:
Opinions blocked his passage. Rent
Were Councils with a gesture; brayed
By hoarse camp-phrase what argument
Dared interpose to waken spleen
In him whose vision grasped the unseen,
Whose counsellor was the ready blade,
Whose argument the cannonade.

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He loathed his land's divergent parties, loth
To grant them speech, they were such idle troops;
The friable and the grumous, dizzards both.
Men were good sticks his mastery wrought from hoops;
Some serviceable, none credible on oath.
The silly preference they nursed to die
In beds he scorned, and led where they should lie.
If magic made them pliable for his use,
Magician he could be by planned surprise.
For do they see the deuce in human guise,
As men's acknowledged head appears the deuce,
And they will toil with devilish craft and zeal.
Among them certain vagrant wits that had
Ideas buzzed; they were the feebly mad;
Pursuers of a film they hailed ideal;
But could be dangerous fire-flies for a brain
Subdued by fact, still amorous of the inane.
With a breath he blew them out, to beat their wings
The way of such transfeminated things,
And France had sense of vacancy in Light.

That is the soul's dead darkness, making clutch
Wild hands for aid at muscles within touch;
Adding to slavery's chain the stringent twist;
Even when it brings close surety that aright
She reads her Tyrant through his golden mist;
Perceives him fast to a harsher Tyrant bound;
Self-ridden, self-hunted, captive of his aim;
Material grandeur's ape, the Infernal's hound;
Enormous, with no infinite around;
No starred deep sky, no Muse, or lame
The dusty pattering pinions,
The voice as through the brazen tube of Fame.

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X

Hugest of engines, a much limited man,
She saw the Lustrous, her great lord, appear
Through that smoked glass her last privation brought
To point her critic eye and spur her thought:
A heart but to propel Leviathan;
A spirit that breathed but in earth's atmosphere.
Amid the plumed and sceptred ones
Irradiatingly Jovian,
The mountain tower capped by the floating cloud;
A nursery screamer where dialectics ruled:
Mannerless, graceless, laughterless, unlike
Herself in all, yet with such power to strike,
That she the various features she could scan
Dared not to sum, though seeing: and befooled
By power which beamed omnipotent, she bowed,
Subservient as roused echo round his guns.
Invulnerable Prince of Myrmidons,
He sparkled, by no sage Athene schooled.
Partly she read her riddle, stricken and pained;
But irony, her spirit's tongue, restrained.
The Critic, last of vital in the proud
Enslaved, when most detectively endowed,
Admired how irony's venom off him ran,
Like rain-drops down a statue cast in bronze:
Whereby of her keen rapier disarmed,
Again her chant of eulogy began,
Protesting, but with slavish senses charmed.

Her warrior, chief among the valorous great
In arms he was, dispelling shades of blame,
With radiance palpable in fruit and weight.
Heard she reproach, his victories blared response;
His victories bent the Critic to acclaim,
As with fresh blows upon a ringing sconce.

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Or heard she from scarred ranks of jolly growls
His veterans dwarf their reverence and, like owls,
Laugh in the pitch of discord, to exalt
Their idol for some genial trick or fault,
She, too, became his marching veteran.
Again she took her breath from them who bore
His eagles through the tawny roar,
And murmured at a peaceful state,
That bred the title charlatan,
As missile from the mouth of hate,
For one the daemon fierily filled and hurled,
Cannon his name,
Shattering against a barrier world;
Her supreme player of man's primaeval game.

The daemon filled him, and he filled her sons;
Strung them to stature over human height,
As march the standards down the smoky fight;
Her cherubim, her towering mastodons!
Directed vault or breach, break through
Earth's toughest, seasons, elements, tame;
Dash at the bulk the sharpened few;
Count death the smallest of their debts:
Show that the will to do
Is masculine and begets!

These princes unto him the mother owed;
These jewels of manhood that rich hand bestowed.
What wonder, though with wits awake
To read her riddle, for these her offspring's sake;—
And she, before high heaven adulteress,
The lost to honour, in his glory clothed,
Else naked, shamed in sight of men, self-loathed;—
That she should quench her thought, nor worship less
Than ere she bled on sands or snows and knew
The slave's alternative, to worship or to rue!

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XI

Bright from the shell of that much limited man,
Her hero, like the falchion out of sheath,
Like soul that quits the tumbled body, soared:
And France, impulsive, nuptial with his plan,
Albeit the Critic fretting her, adored
Once more. Exultingly her heart went forth,
Submissive to his mind and mood,
The way of those pent-eyebrows North;
For now was he to win the wreath
Surpassing sunniest in camp or Court;
Next, as the blessed harvest after years of blight,
Sit, the Great Emperor, to be known the Good!

Now had the Seaman's volvent sprite,
Lean from the chase that barked his contraband,
A beggared applicant at every port,
To strew the profitless deeps and rot beneath,
Slung northward, for a hunted beast's retort
On sovereign power; there his final stand,
Among the perjured Scythian's shaggy horde,
The hydrocephalic aërolite
Had taken; flashing thence repellent teeth,
Though Europe's Master Europe's Rebel banned
To be earth's outcast, ocean's lord and sport.

Unmoved might seem the Master's taunted sword.
Northward his dusky legions nightly slipped,
As on the map of that all-provident head;
He luting Peace the while, like morning's cock
The quiet day to round the hours for bed;
No pastoral shepherd sweeter to his flock.
Then Europe first beheld her Titan stripped.
To what vast length of limb and mounds of thews,

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How trained to scale the eminences, pluck
The hazards for new footing, how compel
Those timely incidents by men named luck,
Through forethought that defied the Fates to choose,
Her grovelling admiration had not yet
Imagined of the great man-miracle;
And France recounted with her comic smile
Duplicities of Court and Cabinet,
The silky female of his male in guile,
Wherewith her two-faced Master could amuse
A dupe he charmed in sunny beams to bask,
Before his feint for camisado struck
The lightning moment of the cast-off mask.

Splendours of earth repeating heaven's at set
Of sun down mountain cloud in masses arched;
Since Asia upon Europe marched,
Unmatched the copious multitudes; unknown
To Gallia's over-runner, Rome's inveterate foe,
Such hosts; all one machine for overthrow,
Coruscant from the Master's hand, compact
As reasoned thoughts in the Master's head; were shown
Yon lightning moment when his acme might
Blazed o'er the stream that cuts the sandy tract
Borussian from Sarmatia's famished flat;
The century's flower; and off its pinnacled throne,
Rayed servitude on Europe's ball of sight.

XII

Behind the Northern curtain-folds he passed.
There heard hushed France her muffled heart beat fast
Against the hollow ear-drum, where she sat
In expectation's darkness, until cracked

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The straining curtain-seams: a scaly light
Was ghost above an army under shroud.
Imperious on Imperial Fact
Incestuously the incredible begat.
His veterans and auxiliaries,
The trained, the trustful, sanguine, proud,
Princely, scarce numerable to recite,—
Titanic of all Titan tragedies!—
That Northern curtain took them, as the seas
Gulp the great ships to give back shipmen white.

Alive in marble, she conceived in soul,
With barren eyes and mouth, the mother's loss;
The bolt from her abandoned heaven sped;
The snowy army rolling knoll on knoll
Beyond horizon, under no blest Cross:
By the vulture dotted and engarlanded.

Was it a necromancer lured
To weave his tense betraying spell?
A Titan whom our God endured
Till he of his foul hungers fell,
By all his craft and labour scourged?
A deluge Europe's liberated wave,
Pæan to sky, leapt over that vast grave.
Its shadow-points against her sacred land converged.
And him, her yoke-fellow, her black lord, her fate,
In doubt, in fevered hope, in chills of hate,
That tore her old credulity to strips,
Then pressed the auspicious relics on her lips,
His withered slave for foregone miracles urged.
And he, whom now his ominous halo's round,
A three parts blank decrescent sickle, crowned,
Prodigious in catastrophe, could wear
The realm of Darkness with its Prince's air;

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Assume in mien the resolute pretence
To satiate an hungered confidence,
Proved criminal by the sceptic seen to cower
Beside the generous face of that frail flower.

XIII

Desire and terror then had each of each:
His crown and sword were staked on the magic stroke;
Her blood she gave as one who loved her leech;
And both did barter under union's cloak.
An union in hot fever and fierce need
Of either's aid, distrust in trust did breed.
Their traffic instincts hooded their live wits
To issues. Never human fortune throve
On such alliance. Viewed by fits,
From Vulcan's forge a hovering Jove
Evolved. The slave he dragged the Tyrant drove.
Her awe of him his dread of her invoked:
His nature with her shivering faith ran yoked.
What wisdom counselled, Policy declined;
All perils dared he save the step behind.
Ahead his grand initiative becked:
One spark of radiance blurred, his orb was wrecked.
Stripped to the despot upstart, for success
He raged to clothe a perilous nakedness.
He would not fall, while falling; would not be taught,
While learning; would not relax his grasp on aught
He held in hand, while losing it; pressed advance,
Pricked for her lees the veins of wasted France;
Who, had he stayed to husband her, had spun
The strength he taxed unripened for his throw,
In vengeful casts calamitous,
On fields where palsying Pyrrhic laurels grow,
The luminous the ruinous.
An incalescent scorpion,

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And fierier for the mounded cirque
That narrowed at him thick and murk,
This gambler with his genius
Flung lives in angry volleys, bloody lightnings, flung
His fortunes to the hosts he stung,
With victories clipped his eagle's wings.
By the hands that built him up was he undone:
By the star aloft, which was his ram's-head will
Within; by the toppling throne the soldier won;
By the yeasty ferment of what once had been,
To cloud a rational mind for present things;
By his own force, the suicide in his mill.
Needs never God of Vengeance intervene
When giants their last lesson have to learn.
Fighting against an end he could discern,
The chivalry whereof he had none
He called from his worn slave's abundant springs:
Not deigning spousally entreat
That ever blinded by his martial skill,
But harsh to have her worship counted out
In human coin, her vital rivers drained,
Her infant forests felled, commanded die
The decade thousand deaths for his Imperial seat,
Where throning he her faith in him maintained;
Bound Reason to believe delayed defeat
Was triumph; and what strength in her remained
To head against the ultimate foreseen rout,
Insensate taxed; of his impenitent will,
Servant and sycophant: without ally,
In Python's coils, the Master Craftsman still;
The smiter, panther springer, trapper sly,
The deadly wrestler at the crucial bout,
The penetrant, the tonant, tower of towers,
Striking from black disaster starry showers.
Her supreme player of man's primaeval game,

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He won his harnessed victim's rapturous shout,
When every move was mortal to her frame,
Her prayer to life that stricken he might lie,
She to exchange his laurels for earth's flowers.

The innumerable whelmed him, and he fell:
A vessel in mid-ocean under storm.
Ere ceased the lullaby of his passing bell,
He sprang to sight, in human form
Revealed, from no celestial aids:
The shades enclosed him, and he fired the shades.

Cannon his name,
Cannon his voice, he came.
The fount of miracles from drought-dust arose,
Amazing even on his Imperial stage,
Where marvels lightened through the alternate hours
And winged o'er human earth's heroical shone.
Into the press of cumulative foes,
Across the friendly fields of smoke and rage,
A broken structure bore his furious powers;
The man no more, the Warrior Chief the same;
Match for all rivals; in himself but flame
Of an outworn lamp, to illumine nought anon.
Yet loud as when he first showed War's effete
Their Schoolman off his eagre mounted high,
And summoned to subject who dared compete,
The cannon in the name Napoleon
Discoursed of sulphur earth to curtained sky.
So through a tropic day a regnant sun,
Where armies of assailant vapours thronged,
His glory's trappings laid on them: comes night,
Enwraps him in a bosom quick of heat
From his anterior splendours, and shall seem
Day instant, Day's own lord in the furnace gleam,
The virulent quiver on ravished eyes prolonged,

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When severed darkness, all flaminical bright,
Slips vivid eagles linked in rapid flight;
Which bring at whiles the lionly far roar,
As wrestled he with manacles and gags,
To speed across a cowering world once more,
Superb in ordered floods, his lordly flags.
His name on silence thundered, on the obscure
Lightened; it haunted morn and even-song:
Earth of her prodigy's extinction long,
With shudderings and with thrillings, hung unsure.

Snapped was the chord that made the resonant bow,
In France, abased and like a shrunken corse;
Amid the weakest weak, the lowest low,
From the highest fallen, stagnant off her source;
Condemned to hear the nations' hostile mirth;
See curtained heavens, and smell a sulphurous earth;
Which told how evermore shall tyrant Force
Beget the greater for its overthrow.
The song of Liberty in her hearing spoke
A foreign tongue; Earth's fluttering little lyre
Unlike, but like the raven's ravening croak.
Not till her breath of being could aspire
Anew, this loved and scourged of Angels found
Our common brotherhood in sight and sound:
When mellow rang the name Napoleon,
And dim aloft her young Angelical waved.
Between ethereal and gross to choose,
She swung; her soul desired, her senses craved.
They pricked her dreams, while oft her skies were dun
Behind o'ershadowing foemen: on a tide
They drew the nature having need of pride
Among her fellows for its vital dues:
He seen like some rare treasure-galleon,
Hull down, with masts against the Western hues.

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FRANCE

DECEMBER 1870[1]

I

We look for her that sunlike stood
Upon the forehead of our day,
An orb of nations, radiating food
For body and for mind alway.
Where is the Shape of glad array;
The nervous hands, the front of steel,
The clarion tongue? Where is the bold proud face?
We see a vacant place;
We hear an iron heel.

II

O she that made the brave appeal
For manhood when our time was dark,
And from our fetters drove the spark
Which was as lightning to reveal
New seasons, with the swifter play
Of pulses, and benigner day;
She that divinely shook the dead
From living man; that stretched ahead
Her resolute forefinger straight,
And marched toward the gloomy gate
Of earth's Untried, gave note, and in
The good name of Humanity
Called forth the daring vision! she,
She likewise half corrupt of sin,
Angel and Wanton! can it be?

[1] Written in December 1870, printed in the 'Fortnightly Review,' and published in the volume 'Ballads and Poems.'

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Her star has foundered in eclipse,
The shriek of madness on her lips;
Shreds of her, and no more, we see.
There is horrible convulsion, smothered din,
As of one that in a grave-cloth struggles to be free.

III

Look not for spreading boughs
On the riven forest tree.
Look down where deep in blood and mire
Black thunder plants his feet and ploughs
The soil for ruin: that is France:
Still thrilling like a lyre,
Amazed to shivering discord from a fall
Sudden as that the lurid hosts recall
Who met in heaven the irreparable mischance.
O that is France!
The brilliant eyes to kindle bliss,
The shrewd quick lips to laugh and kiss,
Breasts that a sighing world inspire,
And laughter-dimpled countenance
Where soul and senses caught desire!

IV

Ever invoking fire from heaven, the fire
Has grasped her, unconsumable, but framed
For all the ecstasies of suffering dire.
Mother of Pride, her sanctuary shamed:
Mother of Delicacy, and made a mark
For outrage: Mother of Luxury, stripped stark:
Mother of Heroes, bondsmen: thro' the rains,
Across her boundaries, lo the league-long chains!
Fond Mother of her martial youth; they pass,
Are spectres in her sight, are mown as grass!

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Mother of Honour, and dishonoured: Mother
Of Glory, she condemned to crown with bays
Her victor, and be fountain of his praise.
Is there another curse? There is another:
Compassionate her madness: is she not
Mother of Reason? she that sees them mown
Like grass, her young ones! Yea, in the low groan
And under the fixed thunder of this hour
Which holds the animate world in one foul blot
Tranced circumambient while relentless Power
Beaks at her heart and claws her limbs down-thrown,
She, with the plungeing lightnings overshot,
With madness for an armour against pain,
With milkless breasts for little ones athirst,
And round her all her noblest dying in vain,
Mother of Reason is she, trebly cursed,
To feel, to see, to justify the blow;
Chamber to chamber of her sequent brain
Gives answer of the cause of her great woe,
Inexorably echoing thro' the vaults,
''Tis thus they reap in blood, in blood who sow:
'This is the sum of self-absolvëd faults.'
Doubt not that thro' her grief, with sight supreme,
Thro' her delirium and despair's last dream,
Thro' pride, thro' bright illusion and the brood
Bewildering of her various Motherhood,
The high strong light within her, tho' she bleeds,
Traces the letters of returned misdeeds.
She sees what seed long sown, ripened of late,
Bears this fierce crop; and she discerns her fate
From origin to agony, and on
As far as the wave washes long and wan
Off one disastrous impulse: for of waves
Our life is, and our deeds are pregnant graves
Blown rolling to the sunset from the dawn.

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V

Ah, what a dawn of splendour, when her sowers
Went forth and bent the necks of populations
And of their terrors and humiliations
Wove her the starry wreath that earthward lowers
Now in the figure of a burning yoke!
Her legions traversed North and South and East,
Of triumph they enjoyed the glutton's feast:
They grafted the green sprig, they lopped the oak.
They caught by the beard the tempests, by the scalp
The icy precipices, and clove sheer through
The heart of horror of the pinnacled Alp,
Emerging not as men whom mortals knew.
They were the earthquake and the hurricane,
The lightnings and the locusts, plagues of blight,
Plagues of the revel: they were Deluge rain,
And dreaded Conflagration; lawless Might.
Death writes a reeling line along the snows,
Where under frozen mists they may be tracked,
Who men and elements provoked to foes,
And Gods: they were of god and beast compact:
Abhorred of all. Yet, how they sucked the teats
Of Carnage, thirsty issue of their dam,
Whose eagles, angrier than their oriflamme,
Flushed the vext earth with blood, green earth forgets.
The gay young generations mask her grief;
Where bled her children hangs the loaded sheaf.
Forgetful is green earth; the Gods alone
Remember everlastingly: they strike
Remorselessly, and ever like for like.
By their great memories the Gods are known.

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VI

They are with her now, and in her ears, and known.
'Tis they that cast her to the dust for Strength,
Their slave, to feed on her fair body's length,
That once the sweetest and the proudest shone;
Scoring for hideous dismemberment
Her limbs, as were the anguish-taking breath
Gone out of her in the insufferable descent
From her high chieftainship; as were she death,
Who hears a voice of justice, feels the knife
Of torture, drinks all ignominy of life.
They are with her; and the painful Gods might weep,
If ever rain of tears came out of heaven
To flatter Weakness and bid conscience sleep,
Viewing the woe of this Immortal, driven
For the soul's life to drain the maddening cup
Of her own children's blood implacably:
Unsparing even as they to furrow up
The yellow land to likeness of a sea:
The bountiful fair land of vine and grain,
Of wit and grace and ardour, and strong roots,
Fruits perishable, imperishable fruits;
Furrowed to likeness of the dim grey main
Behind the black obliterating cyclone.

VII

Behold, the Gods are with her, and are known.
Whom they abandon misery persecutes
No more: them half-eyed apathy may loan
The happiness of pitiable brutes.
Whom the just Gods abandon have no light,
No ruthless light of introspective eyes
That in the midst of misery scrutinize
The heart and its iniquities outright.

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They rest, they smile and rest; have earned perchance
Of ancient service quiet for a term;
Quiet of old men dropping to the worm;
And so goes out the soul. But not of France.
She cries for grief, and to the Gods she cries,
For fearfully their loosened hands chastize,
And icily they watch the rod's caress
Ravage her flesh from scourges merciless,
But she, inveterate of brain, discerns
That Pity has as little place as Joy
Among their roll of gifts; for Strength she yearns,
For Strength, her idol once, too long her toy.
Lo, Strength is of the plain root-Virtues born:
Strength shall ye gain by service, prove in scorn,
Train by endurance, by devotion shape.
Strength is not won by miracle or rape.
It is the offspring of the modest years,
The gift of sire to son, thro' those firm laws
Which we name Gods; which are the righteous cause,
The cause of man, and manhood's ministers.
Could France accept the fables of her priests,
Who blest her banners in this game of beasts,
And now bid hope that heaven will intercede
To violate its laws in her sore need,
She would find comfort in their opiates:
Mother of Reason! can she cheat the Fates?
Would she, the champion of the open mind,
The Omnipotent's prime gift—the gift of growth—
Consent even for a night-time to be blind,
And sink her soul on the delusive sloth,
For fruits ethereal, and material, both,
In peril of her place among mankind?
The Mother of the many Laughters might
Call one poor shade of laughter in the light

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Of her unwavering lamp to mark what things
The world puts faith in, careless of the truth:
What silly puppet-bodies danced on strings,
Attached by credence, we appear in sooth,
Demanding intercession, direct aid,
When the whole tragic tale hangs on a broken blade!

She swung the sword for centuries; in a day
It slipped her, like a stream cut off from source.
She struck a feeble hand, and tried to pray,
Clamoured of treachery, and had recourse
To drunken outcries in her dream that Force
Needed but hear her shouting to obey.
Was she not formed to conquer? The bright plumes
Of crested vanity shed graceful nods:
Transcendent in her foundries, Arts and looms,
Had France to fear the vengeance of the Gods?
Her faith was on the battle-roll of names
Sheathed in the records of old war; with dance
And song she thrilled her warriors and her dames,
Embracing her Dishonour: gave him France
From head to foot, Frence present and to come,
So she might hear the trumpet and the drum—
Bellona and Bacchante! rushing forth
On yon stout marching Schoolmen of the North.

Inveterate of brain, well knows she why
Strength failed her, faithful to himself the first:
Her dream is done, and she can read the sky,
And she can take into her heart the worst
Calamity to drug the shameful thought
Of days that made her as the man she served
A name of terror, but a thing unnerved:
Buying the trickster, by the trickster bought,
She for dominion, he to patch a throne.

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VIII

Henceforth of her the Gods are known,
Open to them her breast is laid.
Inveterate of brain, heart-valiant,
Never did fairer creature pant
Before the altar and the blade!

IX

Swift fall the blows, and men upbraid,
And friends give echo blunt and cold,
The echo of the forest to the axe.
Within her are the fires that wax
For resurrection from the mould.

X

She snatched at heaven's flame of old,
And kindled nations: she was weak:
Frail sister of her heroic prototype,
The Man; for sacrifice unripe,
She too must fill a Vulture's beak.
Deride the vanquished, and acclaim
The conqueror, who stains her fame,
Still the Gods love her, for that of high aim
Is this good France, the bleeding thing they stripe.

XI

She shall rise worthier of her prototype
Thro' her abasement deep; the pain that runs
From nerve to nerve some victory achieves.
They lie like circle-strewn soaked Autumn-leaves
Which stain the forest scarlet, her fair sons!
And of their death her life is: of their blood
From many streams now urging to a flood,

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No more divided, France shall rise afresh.
Of them she learns the lesson of the flesh:—
The lesson writ in red since first Time ran,
A hunter hunting down the beast in man:
That till the chasing out of its last vice,
The flesh was fashioned but for sacrifice.

Immortal Mother of a mortal host!
Thou suffering of the wounds that will not slay,
Wounds that bring death but take not life away!—
Stand fast and hearken while thy victors boast:
Hearken, and loathe that music evermore.
Slip loose thy garments woven of pride and shame:
The torture lurks in them, with them the blame
Shall pass to leave thee purer than before.
Undo thy jewels, thinking whence they came,
For what, and of the abominable name
Of her who in imperial beauty wore.

O Mother of a fated fleeting host
Conceived in the past days of sin, and born
Heirs of disease and arrogance and scorn,
Surrender, yield the weight of thy great ghost,
Like wings on air, to what the heavens proclaim
With trumpets from the multitudinous mounds
Where peace has filled the hearing of thy sons:
Albeit a pang of dissolution rounds
Each new discernment of the undying ones,
Do thou stoop to these graves here scattered wide
Along thy fields, as sunless billows roll;
These ashes have the lesson for the soul.
'Die to thy Vanity, and strain thy Pride,
Strip off thy Luxury: that thou may'st live,
Die to thyself,' they say, 'as we have died
From dear existence and the foe forgive,

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Nor pray for aught save in our little space
To warn good seed to greet the fair earth's face.'
O Mother! take their counsel, and so shall
The broader world breathe in on this thy home,
Light clear for thee the counter-changing dome,
Strength give thee, like an ocean's vast expanse
Off mountain cliffs, the generations all,
Not whirling in their narrow rings of foam,
But as a river forward. Soaring France!
Now is Humanity on trial in thee:
Now may'st thou gather humankind in fee:
Now prove that Reason is a quenchless scroll;
Make of calamity thine aureole,
And bleeding head us thro' the troubles of the sea.

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ALSACE-LORRAINE

I

THE sister Hours in circles linked,
Daughters of men, of men the mates,
Are gone on flow with the day that winked,
With the night that spanned at golden gates.
Mothers, they leave us, quickening seed;
They bear us grain or flower or weed,
As we have sown; is nought extinct
For them we fill to be our Fates.
Life of the breath is but the loan;
Passing death what we have sown.

Pearly are they till the pale inherited stain
Deepens in us, and the mirrors they form on their flow
Darken to feature and nature: a volumed chain,
Sequent of issue, in various eddies they show.
Theirs is the Book of the River of Life, to read
Leaf by leaf by reapers of long-sown seed:
There doth our shoot up to light from a spiriting sane
Stand as a tree whereon numberless clusters grow:
Legible there how the heart, with its one false move
Cast Eurydice pallor on all we love.

Our fervid heart has filled that Book in chief;
Our fitful heart a wild reflection views;
Our craving heart of passion suckling grief
Disowns the author's work it must peruse;
Inconscient in its leap to wreak the deed,
A round of harvests red from crimson seed,

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It marks the current Hours show leaf by leaf,
And rails at Destiny; nor traces clues;
Though sometimes it may think what novel light
Will strike their faces when the mind shall write.

II

Succourful daughters of men are the rosed and starred
Revolving Twelves in their fluent germinal rings,
Despite the burden to chasten, abase, depose.
Fallen on France, as the sweep of scythe over sward,
They breathed in her ear their voice of the crystal springs,
That run from a twilight rise, from a twilight close,
Through alternate beams and glooms, rejoicingly young.
Only to Earth's best loved, at the breathless turns
Where Life in fold of the Shadow reclines unstrung,
And a ghostly lamp of their moment's union burns,
Will such pure notes from the fountain-head be sung.

Voice of Earth's very soul to the soul she would see renewed:
A song that sought no tears, that laid not a touch on the breast
Sobbing aswoon and, like last foxgloves' bells upon ferns
In sandy alleys of woodland silence, shedding to bare.
Daughters of Earth and men, they piped of her natural brood;
Her patient helpful four-feet; wings on the flit or in nest;
Paws at our old-world task to scoop a defensive lair;
Snouts at hunt through the scented grasses; enhavened scuts
Flashing escape under show of a laugh nigh the mossed burrow-mouth.
Sack-like droop bronze pears on the nailed branch-frontage of huts,

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To greet those wedded toilers from acres where sweat is a shower.
Snake, cicada, lizard, on lavender slopes up South,
Pant for joy of a sunlight driving the fielders to bower.
Sharpened in silver by one chance breeze is the olive's grey;
A royal-mantle floats, a red fritillary hies;
The bee, for whom no flower of garden or wild has nay,
Noises, heard if but named, so hot is the trade he plies.
Processions beneath green arches of herbage, the long colonnades;
Laboured mounds that a foot or a wanton stick may subvert;
Homely are they for a lowly look on bedewed grass-blades,
On citied fir-droppings, on twisted wreaths of the worm in dirt.
Does nought so loosen our sight from the despot heart, to receive
Balm of a sound Earth's primary heart at its active beat:
The motive, yet servant, of energy; simple as morn and eve;
Treasureless, fetterless; free of the bonds of a great conceit:
Unwounded even by cruel blows on a body that writhes;
Nor whimpering under misfortune; elusive of obstacles; prompt
To quit any threatened familiar domain seen doomed by the scythes;
Its day's hard business done, the score to the good accompt.

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Creatures of forest and mead, Earth's essays in being, all kinds
Bound by the navel-knot to the Mother, never astray,
They in the ear upon ground will pour their intuitive minds,
Cut man's tangles for Earth's first broad rectilinear way:
Admonishing loftier reaches, the rich adventurous shoots,
Pushes of tentative curves, embryonic upwreathings in air;
Not always the sprouts of Earth's root-Laws preserving her brutes;
Oft but our primitive hungers licentious in fine and fair.

Yet the like aërial growths may chance be the delicate sprays,
Infant of Earth's most urgent in sap, her fierier zeal
For entry on Life's upper fields: and soul thus flourishing pays
The martyr's penance, mark for brutish in man to heel.

Her, from a nerveless well among stagnant pools of the dry,
Through her good aim at divine, shall commune with Earth remake;
Fraternal unto sororial, her, where abashed she may lie,
Divinest of man shall clasp; a world out of darkness awake,
As it were with the Resurrection's eyelids uplifted, to see
Honour in shame, in substance the spirit, in that dry fount
Jets of the songful ascending silvery-bright water-tree
Spout, with our Earth's unbaffled resurgent desire for the mount,
Though broken at intervals, clipped, and barren in seeming it be.

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For this at our nature arises rejuvenescent from Earth,
However respersive the blow and nigh on infernal the fall,
The chastisement drawn down on us merited: are we of worth
Amid our satanic excrescences, this, for the less than a call,
Will Earth reprime, man cherish; the God who is in us and round,
Consenting, the God there seen. Impiety speaks despair;
Religion of virtue of serving as things of the furrowy ground,
Debtors for breath while breath with our fellows in service we share.
Not such of the crowned discrowned
Can Earth or humanity spare;
Such not the God let die.

III

Eastward of Paris morn is high;
And darkness on that Eastward side
The heart of France beholds: a thorn
Is in her frame where shines the morn:
A rigid wave usurps her sky,
With eagle crest and eagle-eyed
To scan what wormy wrinkles hint
Her forces gathering: she the thrown
From station, lopped of an arm, astounded, lone,
Reading late History as a foul misprint:
Imperial, Angelical,
At strife commingled in her frame convulsed;
Shame of her broken sword, a ravening gall;
Pain of the limb where once her warm blood pulsed;

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These tortures to distract her underneath
Her whelmed Aurora's shade. But in that space
When lay she dumb beside her trampled wreath,
Like an unburied body mid the tombs,
Feeling against her heart life's bitter probe
For life, she saw how children of her race,
The many sober sons and daughters, plied,
By cottage lamplight through the water-globe,
By simmering stew-pots, by the serious looms,
Afield, in factories, with the birds astir,
Their nimble feet and fingers; not denied
Refreshful chatter, laughter, galliard songs.
So like Earth's indestructible they were,
That wrestling with its anguish rose her pride,
To feel where in each breast the thought of her,
On whom the circle Hours laid leaded thongs,
Was constant; spoken sometimes in low tone
At lip or in a fluttered look,
A shortened breath: and they were her loved own;
Nor ever did they waste their strength with tears,
For pity of the weeper, nor rebuke,
Though mainly they were charged to pay her debt,
The Mother having conscience in arrears;
Ready to gush the flood of vain regret,
Else hearken to her weaponed children's moan
Of stifled rage invoking vengeance: hell's,
If heaven should fail the counter-wave that swells
In blood and brain for retribution swift.
Those helped not: wings to her soul were these who yet
Could welcome day for labour, night for rest,
Enrich her treasury, built of cheerful thrift,
Of honest heart, beyond all miracles;
And likened to Earth's humblest were Earth's best.

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IV

Brooding on her deep fall, the many strings
Which formed her nature set a thought on Kings,
As aids that might the low-laid cripple lift;
And one among them hummed devoutly leal,
While passed the sighing breeze along her breast.
Of Kings by the festive vanquishers rammed down
Her gorge since fell the Chief, she knew their crown;
Upon her through long seasons was its grasp,
For neither soul's nor body's weal;
As much bestows the robber wasp,
That in the hanging apple makes a meal,
And carves a face of abscess where was fruit
Ripe ruddy. They would blot
Her radiant leap above the slopes acute,
Of summit to celestial; impute
The wanton's aim to her divinest shot;
Bid her walk History backward over gaps;
Abhor the day of Phrygian caps;
Abjure her guerdon, execrate herself;
The Hapsburg, Hohenzollern, Guelph,
Admire repentant; reverently prostrate
Her person unto the belly-god; of whom
Is inward plenty and external bloom;
Enough of pomp and state
And carnival to quench
The breast's desires of an intemperate wench,
The head's ideas beyond legitimate.

She flung them: she was France: nor with far frown
Her lover from the embrace of her refrained:
But in her voice an interwoven wire,
The exultation of her gross renown,
Struck deafness at her heavens, and they waned
Over a look ill-gifted to aspire.

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Wherefore, as an abandonment, irate,
The intemperate summoned up her trumpet days,
Her treasure-galleon's wondrous freight.
The cannon-name she sang and shrieked; transferred
Her soul's allegiance; o'er the Tyrant slurred,
Tranced with the zeal of her first fawning gaze,
To clasp his trophy flags and hail him Saint.

V

She hailed him Saint:
And her Jeanne unsainted, foully sung!
The virgin who conceived a France when funeral glooms
Across a land aquake with sharp disseverance hung:
Conceived, and under stress of battle brought her forth;
Crowned her in purification of feud and foeman's taint;
Taught her to feel her blood her being, know her worth,
Have joy of unity: the Jeanne bescreeched, bescoffed,
Who flamed to ashes, flew up wreaths of faggot fumes;
Through centuries a star in vapour-folds aloft.

For her people to hail her Saint,
Were no lifting of her, Earth's gem,
Earth's chosen, Earth's throb on divine:
In the ranks of the starred she is one,
While man has thought on our line:
No lifting of her, but for them,
Breath of the mountain, beam of the sun
Through mist, out of swamp-fires' lures release,
Youth on the forehead, the rough right way
Seen to be footed: for them the heart's peace,
By the mind's war won for a permanent miracle day.

Her arms below her sword-hilt crossed,
The heart of that high-hallowed Jeanne
Into the furnace-pit she tossed

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Before her body knew the flame,
And sucked its essence: warmth for righteous work,
An undivided power to speed her aim.
She had no self but France: the sainted man
No France but self. Him warrior and clerk,
Free of his iron clutch; and him her young,
In whirled imagination mastodonized;
And him her penmen, him her poets; all
For the visioned treasure-galleon astrain;
Sent zenithward on bass and treble tongue,
Till solely through his glory France was prized.
She who had her Jeanne;
The child of her industrious;
Earth's truest, earth's pure fount from the main;
And she who had her one day's mate,
In the soul's view illustrious
Past blazonry, her Immaculate,
Those hours of slavish Empire would recall;
Thrill to the rattling anchor-chain
She heard upon a day in 'I who can';
Start to the softened, tremulous bugle-blare
Of that Caesarean Italian
Across the storied fields of trampled grain,
As to a Vercingetorix of old Gaul
Blowing the rally against a Caesar's reign.
Her soul's protesting sobs she drowned to swear
Fidelity unto the sainted man,
Whose nimbus was her crown; and be again
The foreigner in Europe, known of none,
None knowing; sight to dazzle, voice to stun.
Rearward she stepped, with thirst for Europe's van;
The dream she nursed a snare,
The flag she bore a pall.

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VI

In Nature is no rearward step allowed.
Hard on the rock Reality do we dash
To be shattered, if the material dream propels.
The worship to departed splendour vowed
Conjured a simulacrum, wove her lash,
For the slow measure timed her peal of bells.

Thereof was the cannon-name a mockery round her hills;
For the will of wills,
Its flaccid ape,
Weak as the final echo off a giant's bawl:
Napoleon for disdain,
His banner steeped in crape.
Thereof the barrier of Alsace-Lorraine;
The frozen billow crested to its fall;
Dismemberment; disfigurement;
Her history blotted; her proud mantle rent;
And ever that one word to reperuse,
With eyes behind a veil of fiery dews;
Knelling the spot where Gallic soil defiled
Showed her sons' valour as a frenzied child
In arms of the mailed man.
Word that her mind must bear, her heart put under ban,
Lest burst it: unto her eyes a ghost,
Incredible though manifest: a scene
Stamped with her new Saint's name: and all his host
A wattled flock the foeman's dogs between!

VII

Mark where a credible ghost pulls bridle to view that bare
Corpse of a field still reddening cloud, and alive in its throes
Beneath her Purgatorial Saint's evocative stare:

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Brand on his name, the gulf of his glory, his Legend's close.
A lustreless Phosphor heading for daybeam Night's dead-born,
His underworld eyeballs grip the cast of the land for a fray
Expugnant; swift up the heights, with the Victor's instinctive scorn
Of the trapped below, he rides; he beholds, and a two-fold grey,
Even as the misty sun growing moon that a frost enrings,
Is shroud on the shrouded; he knows him there in the helmeted ranks.
The golden eagles flap lame wings,
The black double-headed are round their flanks.
He is there in midst of the pupils he harried to brain awake, trod into union; lo,
These are his Epic's tutored Dardans, yon that Rhapsode's Achaeans to know.
Nor is aught of an equipollent conflict seen, nor the weaker's flashed device;
Headless is offered a breast to beaks deliberate, formal, assured, precise.
Ruled by the mathematician's hand, they solve their problem, as on a slate.
This is the ground foremarked, and the day; their leader modestly hazarded date.
His hemleted ranks might be draggers of pools or reapers of plains for the warrior's guile
Displayed; they haul, they rend, as in some orderly office mercantile.
And a timed artillery speaks full-mouthed on a stuttering feeble reduced to nought.
Can it be France, an army of France, tricked, netted, convulsive, all writhen caught?

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Arterial blood of an army's heart outpoured the Grey
Observer sees:
A forest of France in thunder comes, like a landslide
hurled off her Pyrenees.
Torrent and forest ramp, roll, sling on for a charge against
iron, reason, Fate;
It is gapped through the mass midway, bare ribs and dust
ere the helmeted feel its weight.
So the blue billow white-plumed is plunged upon shingle
to screaming withdrawal, but snatched,
Waved is the laurel eternal yielded by Death o'er the
waste of brave men outmatched.
The France of the fury was there, the thing he had wielded,
whose honour was dearer than life;
The Prussia despised, the harried, the trodden, was here;
his pupil, the scholar in strife.

He haled to heel, in a spasm of will,
From sleep or debate, a mannikin squire
With head of a merlin hawk and quill
Acrow on an ear. At him rained fire
From a blast of eyeballs hotter than speech,
To say what a deadly poison stuffed
The France here laid in her bloody ditch,
Through the Legend passing human puffed.

Credible ghost of the field which from him descends,
Each dark anniversary day will its father return,
Haling his shadow to spy where the Legend ends,
That penman trumpeter's part in the wreck discern.

There, with the cup it presents at her lips, she stands,
France, with her future staked on the word it may pledge.
The vengeance urged of desire a reserve countermands;
The patience clasped totters hard on the precipice edge.

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Lopped of an arm, mother love for her own springs quick,
To curdle the milk in her breasts for the young they feed,
At thought of her single hand, and the lost so nigh.
Mother love for her own, who raised her when she lay sick
Nigh death, and would in like fountains fruitlessly bleed,
Withholds the fling of her heart on the further die.

Of love is wisdom. Is it great love, then wise
Will our wild heart be, though whipped unto madness more
By its mentor's counselling voice than thoughtfully reined.
Desire of the wave for the shore,
Passion for one last agony under skies,
To make her heavens remorseful, she restrained.

VIII

On her lost arm love bade her look;
On her one hand to meditate;
The tumult of her blood abate;
Disaster face, derision brook:
Forbade the page of her Historic Muse,
Until her demon his last hold forsook,
And smoothly, with no countenance of hate,
Her conqueror she could scan to measure. Thence
The strange new Winter stream of ruling sense,
Cold, comfortless, but braced to disabuse,
Ran through the mind of this most lowly laid;
From the top billow of victorious War,
Down in the flagless troughs at ebb and flow;
A wreck; her past, her future, both in shade.

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She read the things that are;
Reality unaccepted read
For sign of the distraught, and took her blow
To brain; herself read through;
Wherefore her predatory Glory paid
Napoleon ransom knew.
Her nature's many strings hot gusts did jar
Against the note of reason uttered low,
Ere passionate with duty she might wed,
Compel the bride's embrace of her stern groom.
Joined at an altar liker to the tomb,
Nest of the Furies their first nuptial bed,
They not the less were mated and proclaimed
The rational their issue. Then she rose.

See how the rush of southern Springtide glows
Oceanic in the chariot-wheel's ascent,
Illuminated with one breath. The maimed,
Torn, tortured, winter-visaged, suddenly
Had stature; to the world's wonderment,
Fair features, grace of mien, nor least
The comic dimples round her April mouth,
Sprung of her intimate humanity.
She stood before mankind the very South
Rapt out of frost to flowery drapery;
Unshadowed save when somewhiles she looked East.

IX

Let but the rational prevail,
Our footing is on ground though all else fail:
Our kiss of Earth is then a plight
To walk within her Laws and have her light.
Choice of the life or death lies in ourselves;
There is no fate but when unreason lours.

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This Land the cheerful toiler delves,
The thinker brightens with fine wit,
The lovelier grace as lyric flowers,
Those rosed and starred revolving Twelves
Shall nurse for effort infinite
While leashed to brain the heart of France the Fair
Beats tempered music and its lead subserves.
Washed from her eyes the Napoleonic glare,
Divinely raised by that in her divine,
Not the clear sight of Earth's blunt actual swerves
When her lost look, as on a wave of wine,
Rolls Eastward, and the mother-flag descries
Caress with folds and curves
The fortress over Rhine,
Beneath the one tall spire.
Despite her brooding thought, her nightlong sighs,
Her anguish in desire,
She sees, above the brutish paw
Alert on her still quivering limb—
As little in past time she saw,
Nor when dispieced as prey,
As victrix when abhorred—
A Grand Germania, stout on soil;
Audacious up the ethereal dim;
The forest's Infant; the strong hand for toil;
The patient brain in twilights when astray;
Shrewdest of heads to foil and counterfoil;
The sceptic and devout; the potent sword;
With will and armed to help in hewing way
For Europe's march; and of the most golden chord
Of the Heliconian lyre
Excellent mistress. Yea, she sees, and can admire;
Still seeing in what walks the Gallia leads;
And with what shield upon Alsace-Lorraine
Her wary sister's doubtful look misreads

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A mother's throbs for her lost: so loved: so near
Magnetic. Hard the course for her to steer,
The leap against the sharpened spikes restrain.
For the belted Overshadower hard the course,
On whom devolves the spirit's touchstone, Force:
Which is the strenuous arm, to strike inclined,
That too much adamantine makes the mind;
Forgets it coin of Nature's rich Exchange;
Contracts horizons within present sight:
Amalekite to-day, across its range
Indisputable; to-morrow Simeonite.

X

The mother who gave birth to Jeanne;
Who to her young Angelical sprang;
Who lay with Earth and heard the notes she sang,
And heard her truest sing them; she may reach
Heights yet unknown of nations; haply teach
A thirsting world to learn 'tis 'she who can.'

She that in History's Heliaea pleads
The nation flowering conscience o'er the beast;
With heart expurged of rancour, tame of greeds;
With the winged mind from fang and claw released;—
Will such a land be seen? It will be seen;—
Shall stand adjudged our foremost and Earth's Queen.
Acknowledgement that she of God proceeds
The invisible makes visible, as his priest,
To her is yielded by a world reclaimed.
And stands she mutilated, fancy-shamed,
Yet strong in arms, yet strong in self-control,
Known valiant, her maternal throbs repressed,
Discarding vengeance, Giant with a soul;—

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My faith in her when she lay low
Was fountain; now as wave at flow
Beneath the lights, my faith in God is best;—
On France has come the test
Of what she holds within
Responsive to Life's deeper springs.
She above the nations blest
In fruitful and in liveliest,
In all that servant earth to heavenly bidding brings,
The devotee of Glory, she may win
Glory despoiling none, enrich her kind,
Illume her land, and take the royal seat
Unto the strong self-conqueror assigned.
But ah, when speaks a loaded breath the double name,
Humanity's old Foeman winks agrin.
Her constant Angel eyes her heart's quick beat,
The thrill of shadow coursing through her frame,
Like wind among the ranks of amber wheat.
Our Europe, vowed to unity or torn,
Observes her face, as shepherds note the morn,
And in a ruddy beacon mark an end
That for the flock in their grave hearing rings.
Specked overhead the imminent vulture wings
At poise, one fatal movement indiscreet,
Sprung from the Aetna passions' mad revolts,
Draws down; the midnight hovers to descend;
And dire as Indian noons of ulcer heat
Anticipating tempest and the bolts,
Hangs curtained terrors round her next day's door,
Death's emblems for the breast of Europe flings;
The breast that waits a spark to fire her store.
Shall, then, the great vitality, France,
Signal the backward step once more;

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Again a Goddess Fortune trace
Amid the Deities, and pledge to chance
One whom we never could replace?
Now may she tune her nature's many strings
To noble harmony, be seen, be known.

It was the foreign France, the unruly, feared;
Little for all her witcheries endeared;
Theatrical of arrogance, a sprite
With gaseous vapours overblown,
In her conceit of power ensphered,
Foredoomed to violate and atone;
Her the grim conqueror's iron might
Avengeing clutched, distrusting rent;
Not that sharp intellect with fire endowed
To cleave our webs, run lightnings through our cloud;
Not virtual France, the France benevolent,
The chivalrous, the many-stringed, sublime
At intervals, and oft in sweetest chime;
Though perilously instrument,
A breast for any having godlike gleam.
This France could no antagonist disesteem,
To spurn at heel and confiscate her brood.
Albeit a waverer between heart and mind,
And laurels won from sky or plucked from blood,
Which wither all the wreath when intertwined,
This cherishable France she may redeem.
Beloved of Earth, her heart should feel at length
How much unto Earth's offspring it doth owe.
Obstructions are for levelling, have we strength;
'Tis poverty of soul conceives a foe.
Rejected be the wrath that keeps unhealed
Her panting wound; to higher Courts appealed
The wrongs discerned of higher: Europe waits:
She chooses God or gambles with the Fates.

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Shines the new Helen in Alsace-Lorraine,
A darker river severs Rhine and Rhone,
Is heard a deadlier Epic of the twain;
We see a Paris burn
Or France Napoleon

For yet he breathes whom less her heart forswears
While trembles its desires to thwart her mind:
The Tyrant lives in Victory's return.
What figure with recurrent footstep fares
Around those memoried tracks of scarlet mud,
To sow her future from an ashen urn
By lantern-light, as dragons' teeth are sown?
Of bleeding pride the piercing seër is blind.
But, cleared her eyes of that ensanguined scud
Distorting her true features, to be shown
Benignly luminous, one who bears
Humanity at breast, and she might learn
How surely the excelling genèrous find
Renouncement is possession. Sure
As light enkindles light when heavenly earthly mates,
The flame of pure immits the flame of pure,
Magnanimous magnanimous creates.
So to majestic beauty stricken rears
Hard-visaged rock against the risen glow;
And men are in the secret with the spheres,
Whose glory is celestially to bestow.

Now nation looks to nation, that may live
Their common nurseling, like the torrent's flower,
Shaken by foul Destruction's fast-piled heap.
On France is laid the proud initiative
Of sacrifice in one self-mastering hour,
Whereby more than her lost one will she reap;

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Perchance the very lost regain,
To count it less than her superb reward.
Our Europe, where is debtor each to each,
Pass measure of excess, and war is Cain,
Fraternal from the Seaman's beach,
From answering Rhine in grand accord,
From Neva beneath Northern cloud,
And from our Transatlantic Europe loud,
Will hail the rare example for their theme;
Give response, as rich foliage to the breeze;
In their entrusted nurseling know them one:
Like a brave vessel under press of steam,
Abreast the winds and tides, on angry seas,
Plucked by the heavens forlorn of present sun,
Will drive through darkness, and, with faith supreme,
Have sight of haven and the crowded quays.

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THE CAGEING OF ARES

ILIAD, v. 385

[DEDICATED TO THE COUNCIL AT THE HAGUE, 1899]

How big of breast our Mother Gaea laughed
At sight of her boy Giants on the leap
Each over other as they neighboured home,
Fronting the day's descent across green slopes,
And up fired mountain crags their shadows danced.
Close with them in their fun, she scarce could guess,
Though these two billowy urchins reeked of craft,
It signalled some adventurous master-trick
To set Olympians buzzing in debate,
Lest it might be their godhead undermined,
The Tyranny menaced. Ephialtes high
On shoulders of his brother Otos waved
For the bull-bellowings given to grand good news,
Compact, complexioned in his gleeful roar
While Otos aped the prisoner's wrists and knees,
With doleful sniffs between recurrent howls;
Till, Gaea's lap receiving them, they stretched,
And both upon her bosom shaken to speech,
Burst the hot story out of throats of both,
Like rocky head-founts, baffling in their glut
The hurried spout. And as when drifting storm
Disburdened loses clasp of here and yon
A peak, a forest mound, a valley's gleam
Of grass and the river's crooks and snaky coils,
Signification marvellous she caught,
Through gurglings of triumphant jollity,
Which now engulphed and now gave eye; at last

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Subsided, and the serious naked deed,
With mountain-cloud of laughter banked around,
Stood in her sight confirmed: she could believe
That these, her sprouts of promise, her most prized,
These two made up of lion, bear and fox,
Her sportive, suckling mammoths, her young joy,
Still by the reckoning infants among men,
Had done the deed to strike the Titan host
In envy dumb, in envious heart elate:
These two combining strength and craft had snared,
Emmeshed, bound fast with thongs, discreetly caged
The blood-shedder, the terrible Lord of War;
Destroyer, ravager, superb in plumes;
The barren furrower of anointed fields;
The scarlet heel in towns, foul smoke to sky,
Her hated enemy, too long her scourge:
Great Ares. And they gagged his trumpet mouth
When they had seized on his implacable spear,
Hugged him to reedy helplessness despite
His godlike fury startled from amaze.
For he had eyed them nearing him in play,
The giant cubs, who gambolled and who snarled,
Unheeding his fell presence, by the mount
Ossa, beside a brushwood cavern; there
On Earth's original fisticuffs they called
For ease of sharp dispute: whereat the God,
Approving, deemed that sometime trained to arms,
Good servitors of Ares they would be,
And ply the pointed spear to dominate
Their rebel restless fellows, villain brood
Vowed to defy Immortals. So it chanced
Amusedly he watched them, and as one
The lusty twain were on him and they had him.
Breath to us, Powers of air, for laughter loud!
Cock of Olympus he, superb in plumes!

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Bound like a wheaten sheaf by those two babes!
Because they knew our Mother Gaea loathed him,
Knew him the famine, pestilence and waste;
A desolating fire to blind the sight
With splendour built of fruitful things in ashes;
The gory chariot-wheel on cries for justice;
Her deepest planted and her liveliest voice,
Heard from the babe as from the broken crone.
Behold him in his vessel of bronze encased,
And tumbled down the cave. But rather look—
Ah, that the woman tattler had not sought,
Of all the Gods to let her secret fly,
Hermes, after the thirteen songful months!
Prompting the Dexterous to work his arts,
And shatter earth's delirious holiday,
Then first, as where the fountain runs a stream,
Resolving to composure on its throbs.
But see her in the Seasons through that year;
That one glad year and the fair opening month.
Had never our Great Mother such sweet face!
War with her, gentle war with her, each day
Her sons and daughters urged; at eve were flung,
On the morrow stood to challenge; in their strength
Renewed, indomitable; whereof they won,
From hourly wrestlings up to shut of lids,
Her ready secret: the abounding life
Returned for valiant labour: she and they
Defeated and victorious turn by turn;
By loss enriched, by overthrow restored.
Exchange of powers of this conflict came;
Defacement none, nor ever squandered force.
Is battle nature's mandate, here it reigned,
As music unto the hand that smote the strings;
And she the rosier from their showery brows,
They fruitful from her ploughed and harrowed breast.

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Back to the primal rational of those
Who suck the teats of milky earth, and clasp
Stability in hatred of the insane,
Man stepped; with wits less fearful to pronounce
The mortal mind's concept of earth's divorced
Above; those beautiful, those masterful,
Those lawless. High they sit, and if descend,
Descend to reap, not sowing. Is it just?
Earth in her happy children asked that word,
Whereto within their breast was her reply.
Those beautiful, those masterful, those lawless,
Enjoy the life prolonged, outleap the years;
Yet they ('twas the Great Mother's voice inspired
The audacious thought), they, glorious over dust,
Outleap not her; disrooted from her soar,
To meet the certain fate of earth's divorced,
And clap lame wings across a wintry haze,
Up to the farthest bourne: immortal still,
Thenceforth innocuous; lovelier than when ruled
The Tyranny. This her voice within them told,
When softly the Great Mother chid her sons
Not of the giant brood, who did create
Those lawless Gods, first offspring of our brain
Set moving by an abject blood, that waked
To wanton under elements more benign,
And planted aliens on Olympian heights;—
Imagination's cradle poesy
Become a monstrous pressure upon men;—
Foes of good Gaea; until dispossessed
By light from her, born of the love of her,
Their lordship the illumined brain rejects
For earth's beneficent, the sons of Law,
Her other name. So spake she in their heart,
Among the wheat-blades proud of stalk; beneath
Young vine-leaves pushing timid fingers forth,

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Confidently to cling. And when brown corn
Swayed armied ranks with softened cricket song,
With gold necks bent for any zephyr's kiss;
When vine-roots daily down a rubble soil
Drank fire of heaven athirst to swell the grape;
When swelled the grape, and in it held a ray,
Rich issue of the embrace of heaven and earth;
The very eye of passion drowsed by excess,
And yet a burning lion for the spring;
Then in that time of general cherishment,
Sweet breathing balm and flutes of cool woodside,
He the harsh rouser of ire being absent, caged,
Then did good Gaea's children gratefully
Lift hymns to Gods they judged, but praised for peace,
Delightful Peace, that answers Reason's call
Harmoniously and images her Law;
Reflects, and though short-lived as then, revives,
In memories made present on the brain
By natural yearnings, all the happy scenes;
The picture of an earth allied to heaven;
Between them the known smile behind black masks;
Rightly their various moods interpreted;
And frolic because toilful children borne
With larger comprehension of Earth's aim
At loftier, clearer, sweeter, by their aid.

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THE NIGHT-WALK

AWAKES for me and leaps from shroud
All radiantly the moon's own night
Of folded showers in streamer cloud;
Our shadows down the highway white
Or deep in woodland woven-boughed,
With yon and yon a stem alight.

I see marauder runagates
Across us shoot their dusky wink;
I hear the parliament of chats
In haws beside the river's brink;
And drops the vole off alder-banks,
To push his arrow through the stream.
These busy people had our thanks
For tickling sight and sound but theme
They were not more than breath we drew
Delighted with our world's embrace:
The moss-root smell where beeches grew,
And watered grass in breezy space;
The silken heights, of ghostly bloom
Among their folds, by distance draped.
'Twas Youth, rapacious to consume,
That cried to have its chaos shaped:
Absorbing, little noting, still
Enriched, and thinking it bestowed;
With wistful looks on each far hill
For something hidden, something owed.
Unto his mantled sister, Day
Had given the secret things we sought

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And she was grave and saintly gay;
At times she fluttered, spoke her thought;
She flew on it, then folded wings,
In meditation passing lone,
To breathe around the secret things,
Which have no word, and yet are known;
Of thirst for them are known, as air
Is health in blood: we gained enough
By this to feel it honest fare;
Impalpable, not barren, stuff.

A pride of legs in motion kept
Our spirits to their task meanwhile,
And what was deepest dreaming slept:
The posts that named the swallowed mile;
Beside the straight canal the hut
Abandoned; near the river's source
Its infant chirp; the shortest cut;
The roadway missed; were our discourse;
At times dear poets, whom some view
Transcendent or subdued evoked
To speak the memorable, the true,
The luminous as a moon uncloaked:
For proof that there, among earth's dumb,
A soul had passed and said our best.
Or it might be we chimed on some
Historic favourite's astral crest,
With part to reverence in its gleam,
And part to rivalry the shout:
So royal, unuttered, is youth's dream
Of power within to strike without.
But most the silences were sweet,
Like mothers' breasts, to bid it feel
It lived in such divine conceit
As envies aught we stamp for real.

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To either then an untold tale
Was Life, and author, hero, we.
The chapters holding peaks to scale,
Or depths to fathom, made our glee;
For we were armed of inner fires
Unbled in us the ripe desires;
And passion rolled a quiet sea,
Whereon was Love the phantom sail.

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AT THE CLOSE

To Thee, dear God of Mercy, both appeal,
Who straightway sound the call to arms. Thou know'st;
And that black spot in each embattled host,
Spring of the blood-stream, later wilt reveal.
Now is it red artillery and white steel;
Till on a day will ring the victor's boast,
That 'tis Thy chosen towers uppermost,
Where Thy rejected grovels under heel.
So in all times of man's descent insane
To brute, did strength and craft combining strike,
Even as a God of Armies, his fell blow.
But at the close he entered Thy domain,
Dear God of Mercy, and if lion-like
He tore the fall'n, the Eternal was his Foe.

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A GARDEN IDYL

With sagest craft Arachne worked
Her web, and at a corner lurked,
Awaiting what should plump her soon,
To case it in the death-cocoon.
Sagaciously her home she chose
For visits that would never close;
Inside my chalet-porch her feast
Plucked all the winds but chill North-east.

The finished structure, bar on bar,
Had snatched from light to form a star,
And struck on sight, when quick with dews,
Like music of the very Muse.
Great artists pass our single sense;
We hear in seeing, strung to tense;
Then haply marvel, groan mayhap,
To think such beauty means a trap.
But Nature's genius, even man's
At best, is practical in plans;
Subservient to the needy thought,
However rare the weapon wrought.
As long as Nature holds it good
To urge her creatures' quest for food
Will beauty stamp the just intent
Of weapons upon service bent.
For beauty is a flower of roots
Embedded lower than our boots;
Out of the primal strata springs,
And shows for crown and useful things.

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Arachne's dream of prey to size
Aspired; so she could nigh despise
The puny specks the breezes round
Supplied, and let them shake unwound;
Assured of her fat fly to come;
Perhaps a blue, the spider's plum;
Who takes the fatal odds in fight,
And gives repast an appetite,
By plunging, whizzing, till his wings
Are webbed, and in the lists he swings
A shrouded lump, for her to see
Her banquet in her victory.
This matron of the unnumbered threads,
One day of dandelions' heads
Distributing their gray perruques
Up every gust, I watched with looks
Discreet beside the chalet-door;
And gracefully a light wind bore,
Direct upon my webster's wall,
A monster in the form of ball;
The mildest captive ever snared,
That neither struggled nor despaired,
On half the net invading hung,
And plain as in her mother tongue,
While low the weaver cursed her lures,
Remarked, 'You have me; I am yours.'

Thrice magnified, in phantom shape,
Her dream of size she saw, agape.
Midway the vast round-raying beard
A desiccated midge appeared;
Whose body pricked the name of meal,
Whose hair had growth in earth's unreal;
Provocative of dread and wrath,
Contempt and horror, in one froth,

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Inextricable, insensible,
His poison presence there would dwell,
Declaring him her dream fulfilled,
A catch to compliment the skilled;
And she reduced to beaky skin,
Disgraceful among kith and kin.

Against her corner, humped and aged,
Arachne wrinkled, past enraged,
Beyond disgust or hope in guile.
Ridiculously volatile
He seemed to her last spark of mind;
And that in pallid ash declined
Beneath the blow by knowledge dealt,
Wherein throughout her frame she felt
That he, the light wind's libertine,
Without a scoff, without a grin,
And mannered like the courtly few,
Who merely danced when light winds blew,
Impervious to beak and claws,
Tradition's ruinous Whitebeard was;
Of whom, as actors in old scenes,
Had grannam weavers warned their weans,
With words, that less than feather-weight,
He smote the web like bolt of Fate.

This muted drama, hour by hour,
I watched amid a world in flower,
Ere yet Autumnal threads had laid
Their gray-blue o'er the grass's blade,
And still along the garden-run
The blindworm stretched him, drunk of sun.
Arachne crouched unmoved; perchance
Her visitor performed a dance;

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She puckered thinner; he the same
As when on that light wind he came.

Next day was told what deeds of night
Were done; the web had vanished quite;
With it the strange opposing pair;
And listless waved on vacant air,
For her adieu to heart's content,
A solitary filament.

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A READING OF LIFE

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THE VITAL CHOICE

I

Or shall we run with Artemis
Or yield the breast to Aphrodite?
Both are mighty;
Both give bliss;
Each can torture if derided;
Each claims worship undivided,
In her wake would have us wallow.

II

Youth must offer on bent knees
Homage unto one or other;
Earth, the mother,
This decrees;
And unto the pallid Scyther
Either points us shun we either,
Shun or too devoutly follow.

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WITH THE HUNTRESS

THROUGH the water-eye of night,
Midway between eve and dawn,
See the chase, the rout, the flight
In deep forest; oread, faun,
Goat-foot, antlers laid on neck;
Ravenous all the line for speed.
See yon wavy sparkle beck
Sign of the Virgin Lady's lead.
Down her course a serpent star
Coils and shatters at her heels;
Peals the horn exulting, peals
Plaintive, is it near or far.
Huntress, arrowy to pursue,
In and out of woody glen,
Under cliffs that tear the blue,
Over torrent, over fen,
She and forest, where she skims
Feathery, darken and relume;
Those are her white-lightning limbs
Cleaving loads of leafy gloom.
Mountains hear her and call back,
Shrewd with night: a frosty wail
Distant: her the emerald vale
Folds, and wonders in her track.
Now her retinue is lean,
Many rearward; streams the chase
Eager forth of covert; seen
One hot tide the rapturous race.
Quiver-charged and crescent-crowned,
Up on a flash the lighted mound

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Leaps she, bow to shoulder, shaft
Strung to barb with archer's craft,
Legs like plaited lyre-chords, feet
Songs to see past pitch of sweet.
Fearful swiftness they outrun,
Shaggy wildness, grey or dun,
Challenge, charge of tusks elude:
Theirs the dance to tame the rude;
Beast, and beast in manhood tame,
Follow we their silver flame.
Pride of flesh from bondage free,
Reaping vigour of its waste,
Marks her servitors, and she
Sanctifies the unembraced.
Nought of perilous she recks;
Valour clothes her open breast;
Sweet beyond the thrill of sex;
Hallowed by the sex confessed.
Huntress arrowy to pursue,
Colder she than sunless dew,
She, that breath of upper air;
Ay, but never lyrist sang,
Draught of Bacchus never sprang
Blood the bliss of Gods to share,
High o'er sweep of eagle wings,
Like the run with her, when rings
Clear her rally, and her dart,
In the forest's cavern heart,
Tells of her victorious aim.
Then is pause and chatter, cheer,
Laughter at some satyr lame,
Looks upon the fallen deer,
Measuring his noble crest;
Here a favourite in her train,
Foremost mid her nymphs, caressed;

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All applauded. Shall she reign
Worshipped? O to be with her there!
She, that breath of nimble air,
Lifts the breast to giant power.
Maid and man, and man and maid,
Who each other would devour
Elsewhere, by the chase betrayed,
There are comrades, led by her,
Maid-preserver, man-maker.

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WITH THE PERSUADER

Who murmurs, hither, hither: who
Where nought is audible so fills the ear?
Where nought is visible can make appear
A veil with eyes that waver through,
Like twilight's pledge of blessed night to come,
Or day most golden? All unseen and dumb,
She breathes, she moves, inviting flees,
Is lost, and leaves the thrilled desire
To clasp and strike a slackened lyre,
Till over smiles of hyacinth seas,
Flame in a crystal vessel sails
Beneath a dome of jewelled spray,
For land that drops the rosy day
On nights of throbbing nightingales.

Landward did the wonder flit,
Or heart's desire of her, all earth in it.
We saw the heavens fling down their rose;
On rapturous waves we saw her glide;
The pearly sea-shell half enclose;
The shoal of sea-nymphs flush the tide;
And we, afire to kiss her feet, no more
Behold than tracks along a startled shore,
With brightened edges of dark leaves that feign
An ambush hoped, as heartless night remain.

More closely, warmly: hither, hither! she,
The very she called forth by ripened blood

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For its next breath of being, murmurs; she,
Allurement; she, fulfilment; she,
The stream within us urged to flood;
Man's cry, earth's answer, heaven's consent; O she,
Maid, woman and divinity;
Our over-earthly, inner-earthly mate
Unmated; she, our hunger and our fruit
Untasted; she our written fate
Unread; Life's flowering, Life's root:
Unread, divined; unseen, beheld;
The evanescent, ever-present she,
Great Nature's stern necessity
In radiance clothed, to softness quelled;
With a sword's edge of sweetness keen to take
Our breath for bliss, our hearts for fulness break.
The murmur hushes down, the veil is rent.
Man's cry, earth's answer, heaven's consent,
Her form is given to pardoned sight,
And lets our mortal eyes receive
The sovereign loveliness of celestial white;
Adored by them who solitarily pace,
In dusk of the underworld's perpetual eve,
The paths among the meadow asphodel,
Remembering. Never there her face
Is planetary; reddens to shore sea-shell
Around such whiteness the enamoured air
Of noon that clothes her, never there.
Daughter of light, the joyful light,
She stands unveiled to nuptial sight,
Sweet in her disregard of aid
Divine to conquer or persuade.
A fountain jets from moss; a flower
Bends gently where her sunset tresses shower.
By guerdon of her brilliance may be seen
With eyelids unabashed the passion's Queen.

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Shorn of attendant Graces she can use
Her natural snares to make her will supreme.
A simple nymph it is, inclined to muse
Before the leader foot shall dip in stream:
One arm at curve along a rounded thigh:
Her firm new breasts each pointing its own way;
A knee half bent to shade its fellow shy,
Where innocence, not nature, signals nay.
The bud of fresh virginity awaits
The wooer, and all roseate will she burst:
She touches on the hour of happy mates;
Still is she unaware she wakens thirst.

And while commanding blissful sight believe
It holds her as a body strained to breast,
Down on the underworld's perpetual eve
She plunges the possessor dispossessed;
And bids believe that image, heaving warm,
Is lost to float like torch-smoke after flame;
The phanton any breeze blows out of form;
A thirst's delusion, a defeated aim.

The rapture shed the torture weaves;
The direst blow on human heart she deals:
The pain to know the seen deceives;
Nought true but what insufferably feels.
And stabs of her delicious note,
That is as heavenly light to hearing, heard
Through shelter leaves, the laughter from her throat,
We answer as the midnight's morning's bird.

She laughs, she wakens gleeful cries;
In her delicious laughter part revealed;
Yet mother is she more of moans and sighs,
For longings unappeased and wounds unhealed.

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Yet would she bless, it is her task to bless:
Yon folded couples, passing under shade,
Are her rich harvest; bidden caress, caress,
Consume the fruit in bloom; not disobeyed.
We dolorous complainers had a dream,
Wrought on the vacant air from inner fire,
We saw stand bare of her celestial beam
The glorious Goddess, and we dared desire.

Thereat are shown reproachful eyes, and lips
Of upward curl to meanings half obscure;
And glancing where a wood-nymph lightly skips
She nods: at once that creature wears her lure.
Blush of our being between birth and death:
Sob of our ripened blood for its next breath:
Her wily semblance nought of her denies;
Seems it the Goddess runs, the Goddess hies,
The generous Goddess yields. And she can arm
Her dwarfed and twisted with her secret charm;
Benevolent as Earth to feed her own.
Fully shall they be fed, if they beseech.
But scorn she has for them that walk alone;
Blanched men, starved women, whom no arts can pleach.
The men as chief of criminals she disdains,
And holds the reason in perceptive thought.
More pitiable, like rivers lacking rains,
Kissing cold stones, the women shrink for drought.
Those faceless discords, out of nature strayed,
Rank of the putrefaction ere decayed,
In impious singles bear the thorny wreaths:
Their lives are where harmonious Pleasure breathes
For couples crowned with flowers that burn in dew.
Comes there a tremor of night's forest horn
Across her garden from the insaner crew,
She darkens to malignity of scorn.

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A shiver courses through her garden-grounds:
Grunt of the tusky boar, the baying hounds,
The hunter's shouts, are heard afar, and bring
Dead on her heart her crimsoned flower of Spring.
These, the irreverent of Life's design,
Division between natural and divine
Would cast; these vaunting barrenness for best,
In veins of gathered strength Life's tide arrest;
And these because the roses flood their cheeks,
Vow them in nature wise as when Love speaks.
With them is war; and well the Goddess knows
What undermines the race who mount the rose;
How the ripe moment, lodged in slumberous hours,
Enkindled by persuasion overpowers:
Why weak as are her frailer trailing weeds,
The strong when Beauty gleams o'er Nature's needs,
And timely guile unguarded finds them lie.
They who her sway withstand a sea defy,
At every point of juncture must be proof;
Nor look for mercy from the incessant surge
Her forces mixed of craft and passion urge
For the one whelming wave to spring aloof.
She, tenderness, is pitiless to them
Resisting in her godhead nature's truth.
No flower their face shall be, but writhen stem;
Their youth a frost, their age the dirge for youth.
These miserably disinclined,
The lamentably unembraced,
Insult the Pleasures Earth designed
To people and beflower the waste.
Wherefore the Pleasures pass them by:
For death they live, in life they die.

Her head the Goddess from them turns,
As from grey mounds of ashes in bronze urns.

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She views her quivering couples unconsoled,
And of her beauty mirror they become,
Like orchard blossoms, apple, pear and plum,
Free of the cloud, beneath the flood of gold.
Crowned with wreaths that burn in dew,
Her couples whirl, sun-satiated,
Athirst for shade; they sigh, they wed,
They play the music made of two:
Oldest of earth, earth's youngest till earth's end:
Cunninger than the numbered strings,
For melodies, for harmonies,
For mastered discords, and the things
Not vocable, whose mysteries
Are inmost Love's, Life's reach of Life extend.

Is it an anguish overflowing shame
And the tongue's pudency confides to her,
With eyes of embers, breath of incense myrrh,
The woman's marrow in some dear youth's name,
Then is the Goddess tenderness
Maternal, and she has her sister's tones
Benign to soothe intemperate distress,
Divide despair from hope, and sighs from moans.
Her gentleness imparts exhaling ease
To those of her milk-bearer votaries
As warm of bosom-earth as she; of the source
Direct; erratic but in heart's excess;
Being mortal and ill-matched for Love's great force;
Like green leaves caught with flames by his impress.
And pray they under skies less overcast,
That swiftly may her star of eve descend,
Her lustrous morning star fly not too fast,
To lengthen blissful night will she befriend.

Unfailing her reply to woman's voice
In supplication instant. Is it man's,

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She hears, approves, his words, her garden scans,
And him: the flowers are various, he has choice.
Perchance his wound is deep; she listens long;
Enjoys what music fills the plaintive song;
And marks how he, who would be hawk at poise
Above the bird, his plaintive song enjoys.

She reads him when his humbled manhood weeps
To her invoked: distraction is implored.
A smile, and he is up on godlike leaps
Above, with his bright Goddess owned the adored.
His tales of her declare she condescends;
Can shame his fires, not always goads and rends:
Moreover, quits a throne, and must enclose
A queenlier gem than woman's wayside rose.
She bends, he quickens; she breathes low, he springs
Enraptured; low she laughs, his woes disperse;
Aloud she laughs and sweeps his varied strings.
'Tis taught him how for touch of mournful verse
Rarely the music made of two ascends,
And Beauty's Queen some other way is won.
Or it may solve the riddle, that she lends
Herself to all, and yields herself to none,
Save heavenliest: though claims by men are raised
In hot assurance under shade of doubt:
And numerous are the images bepraised
As Beauty's Queen, should passion head the rout.

Be sure the ruddy hue is Love's: to woo
Love's Fountain we must mount the ruddy hue.
That is her garden's precept, seen where shines
Her blood-flower, and its unsought neighbour pines.
Daughter of light, the joyful light,
She bids her couples face full East,
Reflecting radiance, even when from her feast

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Their outstretched arms brown deserts disunite,
The lion-haunted thickets hold apart.
In love the ruddy hue declares great heart;
High confidence in her whose aid is lent
To lovers lifting the tuned instrument,
Not one of rippled strings and funeral tone.
And doth the man pursue a tightened zone,
Then be it as the Laurel God he runs,
Confirmed to win, with countenance the Sun's.

Should pity bless the tremulous voice of woe
He lifts for pity, limp his offspring show.
For him requiring woman's arts to please
Infantile tastes with babe reluctances,
No race of giants! In the woman's veins
Persuasion ripely runs, through hers the pains.
Her choice of him, should kind occasion nod,
Aspiring blends the Titan with the God;
Yet unto dwarf and mortal, she, submiss
In her high Lady's mandate, yields the kiss;
And is it needed that Love's daintier brute
Be snared as hunter, she will tempt pursuit.
She is great Nature's ever intimate
In breast, and doth as ready handmaid wait,
Until, perverted by her senseless male,
She plays the winding snake, the shrinking snail,
The flying deer, all tricks of evil fame,
Elusive to allure, since he grew tame.

Hence has the Goddess, Nature's earliest Power,
And greatest and most present, with her dower
Of the transcendent beauty, gained repute
For meditated guile. She laughs to hear
A charge her garden's labyrinth's scarce confute,
Her garden's histories tell of to all near.

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Let it be said. But less upon her guile
Doth she rely for her immortal smile.
Still let the rumour spread, and terror screens
To push her conquests by the simplest means.
While man abjures not lustihead, nor swerves
From earth's good labours, Beauty's Queen he serves.

Her spacious garden and her garden's grant
She offers in reward for handsome cheer:
Choice of the nymphs whose looks will slant
The secret down a dewy leer
Of corner eyelids into haze:
Many a fair Aphrosyne
Like flower-bell to honey-bee:
And here they flicker round the maze
Bewildering him in heart and head:
And here they wear the close demure,
With subtle peeps to reassure:
Others parade where love has bled,
And of its crimson weave their mesh:
Others to snap of fingers leap,
As bearing breast with love asleep.
These are her laughters in the flesh.
Or would she fit a warrior mood,
She lights her seeming unsubdued,
And indicates the fortress-key.
Or is it heart for heart that craves,
She flecks along a run of waves
The one to promise deeper sea.

Bands of her limpid primitives,
Or patterned in the curious braid,
Are the blest man's; and whatsoe'er he gives,
For what he gives is he repaid.

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Good is it if by him 'tis held
He wins the fairest ever welled
From Nature's founts: she whispers it: Even I
Not fairer! and forbids him to deny,
Else little is he lover. Those he clasps,
Intent as tempest, worshipful as prayer,—
And be they doves or be they asps,—
Must seem to him the sovereignly fair;
Else counts he soon among life's wholly tamed.
Him whom from utter savage she reclaimed,
Half savage must he stay, would he be crowned
The lover. Else, past ripeness, deathward bound,
He reasons; and the totterer Earth detests,
Love shuns, grim Logic screws in grasp, is he.
Doth man divide divine Necessity
From Joy, between the Queen of Beauty's breasts
A sword is driven; for those most glorious twain
Present her; armed to bless and to constrain.
Of this he perishes; not she, the throned
On rocks that spout their springs to the sacred
mounts.
A loftier Reason out of deeper founts
Earth's chosen Goddess bears: by none disowned
While red blood runs to swell the pulse, she boasts,
And Beauty, like her star, descends the sky;
Earth's answer, heaven's consent unto man's cry,
Uplifted by the innumerable hosts.

Quickened of Nature's eye and ear,
When the wild sap at high tide smites
Within us; or benignly clear
To vision; or as the iris lights
On fluctuant waters; she is ours
Till set of man: the dreamed, the seen;
Flushing the world with odorous flowers:

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A soft compulsion on terrene
By heavenly: and the world is hers
While hunger after Beauty spurs.

So is it sung in any space
She fills, with laugh at shallow laws
Forbidding love's devised embrace,
The music Beauty from it draws.

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THE TEST OF MANHOOD

LIKE a flood river whirled at rocky banks,
An army issues out of wilderness,
With battle plucking round its ragged flanks;
Obstruction in the van; insane excess
Oft at the heart; yet hard the onward stress
Unto more spacious, where move ordered ranks,
And rise hushed temples built of shapely stone,
The work of hands not pledged to grind or slay.
They gave our earth a dress of flesh on bone;
A tongue to speak with answering heaven gave they.
Then was the gracious birth of man's new day;
Divided from the haunted night it shone.

That quiet dawn was Reverence; whereof sprang
Ethereal Beauty in full morningtide.
Another sun had risen to clasp his bride:
It was another earth unto him sang.
Came Reverence from the Huntress on her heights?
From the Persuader came it, in those vales
Whereunto she melodiously invites,
Her troops of eager servitors regales?
Not far those two great Powers of Nature speed
Disciple steps on earth when sole they lead
Nor either points for us the way of flame.
From him predestined mightier it came;
His task to hold them both in breast, and yield
Their dues to each, and of their war be field.
The foes that in repulsion never ceased,
Must he, who once has been the goodly beast

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Of one or other, at whose beck he ran,
Constrain to make him serviceable man;
Offending neither, nor the natural claim
Each pressed, denying, for his true man's name.

Ah, what a sweat of anguish in that strife
To hold them fast conjoined within him still;
Submissive to his will
Along the road of life!
And marvel not he wavered if at whiles
The forward step met frowns, the backward smiles.
For Pleasure witched him her sweet cup to drain;
Repentance offered ecstasy in pain.
Delicious licence called it Nature's cry;
Ascetic rigours crushed the fleshly sigh;
A tread on shingle timed his lame advance
Flung as the die of Bacchanalian Chance,
He of the troubled marching army leaned
On godhead visible, on godhead screened;
The radiant roseate, the curtained white;
Yet sharp his battle strained through day, through night.

He drank of fictions, till celestial aid
Might seem accorded when he fawned and prayed
Sagely the generous Giver circumspect,
To choose for grants the egregious, his elect;
And ever that imagined succour slew
The soul of brotherhood whence Reverence drew.

In fellowship religion has its founts:
The solitary his own God reveres:
Ascend no sacred Mounts
Our hungers or our fears.

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As only for the numbers Nature's care
Is shown, and she the personal nothing heeds,
So to Divinity the spring of prayer
From brotherhood the one way upward leads.
Like the sustaining air
Are both for flowers and weeds.
But he who claims in spirit to be flower
Will find them both an air that doth devour.

Whereby he smelt his treason, who implored
External gifts bestowed but on the sword;
Beheld himself, with less and less disguise,
Through those blood-cataracts which dimmed his eyes,
His army's foe, condemned to strive and fail;
See a black adversary's ghost prevail;
Never, though triumphs hailed him, hope to win
While still the conflict tore his breast within.

Out of that agony, misread for those
Imprisoned Powers warring unappeased,
The ghost of his black adversary rose,
To smother light, shut heaven, show earth diseased.
And long with him was wrestling ere emerged
A mind to read in him the reflex shade
Of its fierce torment; this way, that way urged;
By craven compromises hourly swayed.
Crouched as a nestling, still its wings untried,
The man's mind opened under weight of cloud.
To penetrate the dark was it endowed;
Stood day before a vision shooting wide.
Whereat the spectral enemy lost form;
The traversed wilderness exposed its track.
He felt the far advance in looking back;
Thence trust in his foot forward through the storm.

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Under the low-browed tempest's eye of ire,
That ere it lightened smote a coward heart,
Earth nerved her chastened son to hail athwart
All ventures perilous his shrouded Sire;
A stranger still, religiously divined;
Not yet with understanding read aright.
But when the mind, the cherishable mind,
The multitude's grave shepherd, took full flight,
Himself as mirror raised among his kind
He saw, and first of brotherhood had sight:
Knew that his force to fly, his will to see,
His heart enlarged beyond its ribbed domain,
Had come of many a grip in mastery,
Which held conjoined the hostile rival twain,
And of his bosom made him lord, to keep
The starry roof of his unruffled frame
Awake to earth, to heaven, and plumb the deep
Below, above, aye with a wistful aim.

The mastering mind in him, by tempests blown,
By traitor inmates baited, upward burned;
Perforce of growth, the Master mind discerned,
The Great Unseen, nowise the Dark Unknown.
To whom unwittingly did he aspire
In wilderness, where bitter was his need:
To whom in blindness, as an earthly seed
For light and air, he struck through crimson mire.
But not ere he upheld a forehead lamp,
And viewed an army, once the seeming doomed,
All choral in its fruitful garden camp,
The spiritual the palpable illumed.

This gift of penetration and embrace,
His prize from tidal battles lost or won,
Reveals the scheme to animate his race:

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How that it is a warfare but begun;
Unending; with no Power to interpose;
No prayer, save for strength to keep his ground,
Heard of the Highest; never battle's close,
The victory complete and victor crowned:
Nor solace in defeat, save from that sense
Of strength well spent, which is the strength renewed.
In manhood must he find his competence;
In his clear mind the spiritual food:
God being there while he his fight maintains;
Throughout his mind the Master Mind being there,
While he rejects the suicide despair;
Accepts the spur of explicable pains;
Obedient to Nature, not her slave:
Her lord, if to her rigid laws he bows;
Her dust, if with his conscience he plays knave,
And bids the Passions on the Pleasures browse:—
Whence Evil in a world unread before;
That mystery to simple springs resolved.
His God the Known, diviner to adore,
Shows Nature's savage riddles kindly solved.
Inconscient, insensitive, she reigns
In iron laws, though rapturous fair her face.
Back to the primal brute shall he retrace
His path, doth he permit to force her chains
A soft Persuader coursing through his veins,
An icy Huntress stringing to the chase:
What one the flash disdains;
What one so gives it grace.
But is he rightly manful in her eyes,
A splendid bloodless knight to gain the skies,
A blood-hot son of Earth by all her signs,
Desireing and desireable he shines;
As peaches, that have caught the sun's uprise
And kissed warm gold till noonday, even as vines.

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Earth fills him with her juices, without fear
That she will cast him drunken down the steeps.
All woman is she to this man most dear;
He sows for bread, and she in spirit reaps:
She conscient, she sensitive, in him;
With him enwound, his brave ambition hers:
By him humaner made; by his keen spurs
Pricked to race past the pride in giant limb,
Her crazy adoration of big thews,
Proud in her primal sons, when crags they hurled,
Were thunder spitting lightnings on the world
In daily needs, and she their evening Muse.

This man, this hero, works not to destroy;
This godlike—as the rock in ocean stands;—
He of the myriad eyes, the myriad hands
Creative; in his edifice has joy.
How strength may serve for purity is shown
When he himself can scourge to make it clean.
Withal his pitch of pride would not disown
A sober world that walks the balanced mean
Between its tempters, rarely overthrown:
And such at times his army's march has been.

Near is he to great Nature in the thought
Each changing Season intimately saith,
That nought save apparition knows the death;
To the God-lighted mind of man 'tis nought.
She counts not loss a word of any weight;
It may befal his passions and his greeds
To lose their treasures, like the vein that bleeds,
But life gone breathless will she reinstate.

Close on the heart of Earth his bosom beats,
When he the mandate lodged in it obeys,

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Alive to breast a future wrapped in haze,
Strike camp, and onward, like the wind's cloud-fleets.
Unresting she, unresting he, from change
To change, as rain of cloud, as fruit of rain;
She feels her blood-tree throbbing in her grain,
Yet skyward branched, with loftier mark and range.
No miracle the sprout of wheat from clod,
She knows, nor growth of man in grisly brute;
But he, the flower at head and soil at root,
Is miracle, guides he the brute to God.
And that way seems he bound; that way the road,
With his dark-lantern mind, unled, alone,
Wearifully through forest-tracks unsown,
He travels, urged by some internal goad.

Dares he behold the thing he is, what thing
He would become is in his mind its child;
Astir, demanding birth to light and wing;
For battle prompt, by pleasure unbeguiled.
So moves he forth in faith, if he has made
His mind God's temple, dedicate to truth.
Earth's nourishing delights, no more gainsaid,
He tastes, as doth the bridegroom rich in youth.
Then knows he Love, that beckons and controls;
The star of sky upon his footway cast;
Then match in him who holds his tempters fast,
The body's love and mind's, whereof the soul's.
Then Earth her man for woman finds at last,
To speed the pair unto her goal of goals.
Or is 't the widowed's dream of her new mate?
Seen has she virulent days of heat in flood;
The sly Persuader snaky in his blood;
With her the barren Huntress alternate

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His rough refractory off on kicking heels
To rear; the man dragged rearward, shamed, amazed;
And as a torrent stream where cattle grazed,
His tumbled world. What, then, the faith she feels?
May not his aspect, like her own so fair
Reflexively, the central force belie,
And he, the once wild ocean storming sky,
Be rebel at the core? What hope is there?

'Tis that in each recovery he preserves,
Between his upper and his nether wit,
Sense of his march ahead, more brightly lit;
He less the shaken thing of lusts and nerves;
With such a grasp upon his brute as tells
Of wisdom from that vile relapsing spun.
A Sun goes down in wasted fire, a Sun
Resplendent springs, to faith refreshed compels.

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THE HUELESS LOVE

UNTO that love must we through fire attain,
Which those two held as breath of common air;
The hands of whom were given in bond elsewhere;
Whom Honour was untroubled to restrain.

Midway the road of our life's term they met,
And one another knew without surprise;
Nor care that beauty stood in mutual eyes;
Nor at their tardy meeting nursed regret.

To them it was revealed how they had found
The kindred nature and the needed mind;
The mate by long conspiracy designed;
The flower to plant in sanctuary ground.

Avowed in vigilant solicitude
For either, what most lived within each breast
They let be seen: yet every human test
Demanding righteousness approved them good.

She leaned on a strong arm, and little feared
Abandonment to help if heaved or sank
Her heart at intervals while Love looked blank,
Life rosier were she but less revered.

An arm that never shook did not obscure
Her woman's intuition of the bliss—
Their tempter's moment o'er the black abyss,
Across the narrow plank—he could abjure.

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Then came a day that clipped for him the thread,
And their first touch of lips, as he lay cold,
Was all of earthly in their love untold,
Beyond all earthly known to them who wed.

So has there come the gust at South-west flung
By sudden volt on eves of freezing mist,
When sister snowflake sister snowdrop kissed,
And one passed out, and one the bell-head hung.

UNION IN DISSEVERANCE

Sunset worn to its last vermilion he;
She that star overhead in slow descent:
That white star with the front of angel she;
He undone in his rays of glory spent.

Halo, fair as the bow-shot at his rise,
He casts round her, and knows his hour of rest
Incomplete, were the light for which he dies
Less like joy of the dove that wings to nest.

Lustrous momently, near on earth she sinks;
Life's full throb over breathless and abased:
Yet stand they, though impalpable the links,
One, more one than the bridally embraced.

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SONG IN THE SONGLESS

THEY have no song, the sedges dry,
And still they sing.
It is within my breast they sing,
As I pass by.
Within my breast they touch a string,
They wake a sigh.
There is but sound of sedges dry;
In me they sing.

THE BURDEN OF STRENGTH

IF that thou hast the gift of strength, then know
Thy part is to uplift the trodden low;
Else in a giant's grasp until the end
A hopeless wrestler shall thy soul contend.

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THE MAIN REGRET

WRITTEN FOR THE CHARING CROSS ALBUM

I

SEEN, too clear and historic within us, our sins of omission
Frown when the Autumn days strike us all ruthlessly bare.
They of our mortal diseases find never healing physician;
Errors they of the soul, past the one hope to repair.

II

Sunshine might we have been unto seed under soil, or have scattered
Seed to ascendant suns brighter than any that shone.
Even the limp-legged beggar a sick desperado has flattered
Back to a half-sloughed life cheered by the mere human tone.

ALTERNATION

BETWEEN the fountain and the rill
I passed, and saw the mighty will
To leap at sky; the careless run,
As earth would lead her little son.

Beneath them throbs an urgent well,
That here is play, and there is war.
I know not which had most to tell
Of whence we spring and what we are.

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FOREST HISTORY

I

BENEATH the vans of doom did men pass in.
Heroic who came out; for round them hung
A wavering phantom's red volcano tongue,
With league-long lizard tail and fishy fin:

II

Old Earth's original Dragon; there retired
To his last fastness; overthrown by few.
Him a laborious thrust of roadway slew.
Then man to play devorant straight was fired.

III

More intimate became the forest fear
While pillared darkness hatched malicious life
At either elbow, wolf or gnome or knife,
And wary slid the glance from ear to ear.

IV

In chillness, like a clouded lantern-ray,
The forest's heart of fog on mossed morass,
On purple pool and silky cotton-grass,
Revealed where lured the swallower byway.

V

Dead outlook, flattened back with hard rebound
Off walls of distance, left each mounted height.
It seemed a giant hag-fiend, churning spite
Of humble human being, held the ground.

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VI

Through friendless wastes, through treacherous woodland, slow
The feet sustained by track of feet pursued
Pained steps, and found the common brotherhood
By sign of Heaven indifferent, Nature foe.

VII

Anon a mason's work amazed the sight,
And long-frocked men, called Brothers, there abode.
They pointed up, bowed head, and dug and sowed;
Whereof was shelter, loaf, and warm firelight.

VIII

What words they taught were nails to scratch the head.
Benignant works explained the chanting brood.
Their monastery lit black solitude,
As one might think a star that heavenward led.

IX

Uprose a fairer nest for weary feet,
Like some gold flower nightly inward curled,
Where gentle maidens fled a roaring world,
Or played with it, and had their white retreat.

X

Into big books of metal clasps they pored.
They governed, even as men; they welcomed lays.
The treasures women are whose aim is praise
Was shown in them: the Garden half restored.

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XI

A deluge billow scoured the land off seas,
With widened jaws, and slaughter was its foam.
For food, for clothing, ambush, refuge, home,
The lesser savage offered bogs and trees.

XII

Whence reverence round grey-haired story grew;
And inmost spots of ancient horror shone
As temples under beams of trials bygone;
For in them sang brave times with God in view.

XIII

Till now trim homesteads bordered spaces green,
Like night's first little stars through clearing showers.
Was rumoured how a castle's falcon towers
The wilderness commanded with fierce mien.

XIV

Therein a serious Baron stuck his lance;
For minstrel songs a beauteous Dame would pout.
Gay nights and sombre, felon or devout,
Pricked onward, bound for their unsung romance.

XV

It might be that two errant lords across
The block of each came edged, and at sharp cry
They charged forthwith, the better man to try.
One rode his way, one couched on quiet moss.

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XVI

Perchance a lady sweet, whose lord lay slain,
The robbers into gruesome durance drew.
Swift should her hero come, like lightning's blue!
She prayed for him, as crackling drought for rain;

XVII

As we, that ere the worst her hero haps,
Of Angels guided, nigh that loathly den:
A toady cave beside an ague fen,
Where long forlorn the lone dog whines and yaps.

XVIII

By daylight now the forest fear could read
Itself, and at new wonders chuckling went.
Straight for the roebuck's neck the bowman spent
A dart that laughed at distance and at speed.

XIX

Right loud the bugle's hallali elate
Rang forth of merry dingles round the tors;
And deftest hand was he from foreign wars,
But soon he hailed the home-bred yeoman mate.

XX

Before the blackbird pecked the turf they woke;
At dawn the deer's wet nostrils blew their last.
To forest, haunt of runs and prime repast,
With paying blows, the yokel strained his yoke.

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XXI

The city urchin mooned on forest air,
On grassy sweeps and flying arrows, thick
As swallows o'er smooth streams, and sighed him sick
For thinking that his dearer home was there.

XXII

Familiar, still unseized, the forest sprang
An old-world echo, like no mortal thing.
The hunter's horn might wind a jocund ring,
But held in ear it had a chilly clang.

XXIII

Some shadow lurked aloof of ancient time;
Some warning haunted any sound prolonged,
As though the leagues of woodland held them wronged
To hear an axe and see a township climb.

XXIV

The forest's erewhile emperor at eve
Had voice when lowered heavens drummed for gales.
At midnight a small people danced the dales,
So thin that they might dwindle through a sieve.

XXV

Ringed mushrooms told of them, and in their throats,
Old wives that gathered herbs and knew too much.
The pensioned forester beside his crutch
Struck showers from embers at those bodeful notes.

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XXVI

Came then the one, all ear, all eye, all heart;
Devourer, and insensibly devoured;
In whom the city over forest flowered,
The forest wreathed the city's drama-mart.

XXVII

There found he in new form that Dragon old,
From tangled solitudes expelled; and taught
How blindly each its antidote besought;
For either's breath the needs of either told.

XXVIII

Now deep in woods, with song no sermon's drone,
He showed what charm the human concourse works:
Amid the press of men, what virtue lurks
Where bubble sacred wells of wildness lone.

XXIX

Our conquest these: if haply we retain
The reverence that ne'er will overrun
Due boundaries of realms from Nature won,
Nor let the poet's awe in rapture wane.

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FRAGMENTS OF THE ILIAD IN ENGLISH HEXAMETER VERSE

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ILIAD, i. 149

THE INVECTIVE OF ACHILLES

'HEIGH me! brazen of front, thou glutton for plunder, how can one,
Servant here to thy mandates, heed thee among our Achaians,
Either the mission hie on or stoutly do fight with the foemen?
I, not hither I fared on account of the spear-armèd Trojans,
Pledged to the combat; they unto me have in nowise a harm done;
Never have they, of a truth, come lifting my horses or oxen;
Never in deep-soiled Phthia, the nurser of heroes, my harvests
Ravaged, they; for between us is numbered full many a darksome
Mountain, ay, therewith too the stretch of the windy sea-waters.
O hugely shameless! thee did we follow to hearten thee, justice
Pluck from the Dardans for him, Menelaos, thee too, thou dog-eyed!
Whereof little thy thought is, nought whatever thou reckest.

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Worse, it is thou whose threat 'tis to ravish my prize from me, portion
Won with much labour, the which my gift from the sons of Achaia.
Never, in sooth, have I known my prize equal thine when Achaians
Gave some flourishing populous Trojan town up to pillage.
Nay, sure, mine were the hands did most in the storm of the combat,
Yet when came peradventure share of the booty amongst us,
Bigger to thee went the prize, while I some small blessèd thing bore
Off to the ships, my share of reward for my toil in the bloodshed!
So now go I to Phthia, for better by much it beseems me
Homeward go with my beaked ships now, and I hold not in prospect,
I being outraged, thou mayst gather here plunder and wealth-store.'

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i. 225

'Bibber besotted, with scowl of a cur, having heart of a deer, thou!
Never to join to thy warriors armed for the press of the conflict,
Never for ambush forth with the princeliest sons of Achaia
Dared thy soul, for to thee that thing would have looked as a death-stroke.
Sooth, more easy it seems, down the lengthened array of Achaians,
Snatch at the prize of the one whose voice has been lifted against thee.
Ravening king of the folk, for that thou hast thy rule over abjects;
Else, son of Atreus, now were this outrage on me thy last one.
Nay, but I tell thee, and I do swear a big oath on it likewise:
Yea, by the sceptre here, and it surely bears branches and leaf-buds
Never again, since first it was lopped from its trunk on the mountains,
No more sprouting; for round it all clean has the sharp metal clipped off
Leaves and the bark; ay, verily now do the sons of Achaia,
Guardian hands of the counsels of Zeus, pronouncing the judgement,
Hold it aloft; so now unto thee shall the oath have its portent;
Loud will the cry fo Achilles burst from the sons of Achaia

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Throughout the army, and thou chafe powerless, though in an anguish,
How to give succour when vast crops down under man-slaying Hector
Tumble expiring; and thou deep in thee shalt tear at thy heart-strings,
Rage-wrung, thou, that in nought thou didst honour the flower of Achaians.'

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ILIAD, ii. 455

MARSHALLING OF THE ACHAIANS

LIKE as a terrible fire feeds fast on a forest enormous,
Up on a mountain height, and the blaze of it radiates round far,
So on the bright blest arms of the host in their march did the splendour
Gleam wide round through the circle of air right up to the sky-vault.
They, now, as when swarm thick in the air multitudinous winged flocks,
Be it of geese or of cranes or the long-necked troops of the wild-swans,
Off that Asian mead, by the flow of the waters of Kaïstros;
Hither and yon fly they, and rejoicing in pride of their pinions,
Clamour, shaped to their ranks, and the mead all about them resoundeth;
So those numerous tribes from their ships and their shelterings poured forth
On that plain of Scamander, and horrible rumbled beneath them
Earth to the quick-paced feet of the men and the tramp of the horse-hooves.
Stopped they then on the fair-flower'd field of Scamander, their thousands
Many as leaves and the blossoms born of the flowerful season.
Even as countless hot-pressed flies in their multitudes traverse,

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Clouds of them, under some herdsman's wonning, where then are the milk-pails
Also, full of their milk, in the bountiful season of spring-time;
Even so thickly the long-haired sons of Achaia the plain held,
Prompt for the dash at the Trojan host, with the passion to crush them.
Those, likewise, as the goatherds, eyeing their vast flocks of goats, know
Easily one from the other when all get mixed o'er the pasture,
So did the chieftains rank them here there in their places for onslaught,
Hard on the push of the fray; and among them King Agamemnon,
He, for his eyes and his head, as when Zeus glows glad in his thunder,
He with the girdle of Ares, he with the breast of Poseidon.

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ILIAD, xi. 148

AGAMEMNON IN THE FIGHT

THESE, then, he left, and away where ranks were now clashing the thickest,
Onward rushed, and with him rushed all of the bright-greaved Achaians.
Foot then footmen slew, that were flying from direful compulsion,
Horse at the horsemen (up from off under them mounted the dust-cloud,
Up off the plain, raised up cloud-thick by the thundering horse-hooves)
Hewed with the sword's sharp edge; and so meanwhile Lord Agamemnon
Followed, chasing and slaughtering aye, on-urgeing the Argives.
Now, as when fire voracious catches the unclippèd woodland,
This way bears it and that the great whirl of the wind, and the scrubwood
Stretches uptorn, flung forward alength by the fire's fury rageing,
So beneath Atreides Agamemnon heads of the scattered
Trojans fell; and in numbers amany the horses, neck-stiffened,
Rattled their vacant cars down the roadway gaps of the war-field,
Missing the blameless charioteers, but, for these, they were outstretched
Flat upon earth, far dearer to vultures than to their home-mates.

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ILIAD, xi. 378

PARIS AND DIOMEDES

So he, with a clear shout of laughter,
Forth of his ambush leapt, and he vaunted him, uttering thiswise:
'Hit thou art! not in vain flew the shaft; how by rights it had pierced thee
Into the undermost gut, therewith to have rived thee of life-breath!
Following that had the Trojans plucked a new breath from their direst,
They all frighted of thee, as the goats bleat in flight from a lion.'
Then unto him untroubled made answer stout Diomedes:
'Bow-puller, jiber, thy bow for thy glorying, spyer at virgins!
If that thou dared'st face me here out in the open with weapons,
Nothing then would avail thee thy bow and thy thick shot of arrows.
Now thou plumest thee vainly because of a graze of my footsole;
Reck I as were that stroke from a woman or some pettish infant.
Aye flies blunted the dart of the man that 's emasculate, noughtworth!
Otherwise hits, forth flying from me, and but strikes it the slightest,
My keen shaft, and it numbers a man of the dead fallen straightway.

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Torn, troth, then are the cheeks of the wife of that man
fallen slaughtered,
Orphans his babes, full surely he reddens the earth with
his blood-drops,
Rotting, round him the birds, more numerous they than
the women.'

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Iliad, xiv. 283

HYPNOS ON IDA

They then to fountain-abundant Ida, mother of wild beasts,
Came, and they first left ocean to fare over mainland at Lektos,
Where underneath of their feet waved loftiest growths of the woodland.
There hung Hypnos fast, ere the vision of Zeus was observant,
Mounted upon a tall pine-tree, tallest of pines that on Ida
Lustily spring off soil for the shoot up aloft into aether.
There did he sit well-cloaked by the wide-branched pine for concealment,
That loud bird, in his form like, that perched high up in the mountains,
Chalkis is named by the Gods, but of mortals known as Kymindis.

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ILIAD, xiv. 394

CLASH IN ARMS OF THE ACHAIANS AND TROJANS

NOT the sea-wave so bellows abroad when it bursts upon shingle,
Whipped from the sea's deeps up by the terrible blast of the Northwind;
Nay, nor is ever the roar of the fierce fire's rush so arousing,
Down along mountain-glades, when it surges to kindle a woodland;
Nay, nor so tonant thunders the stress of the gale in the oak-trees'
Foliage-tresses high, when it rages to raveing its utmost;
As rose then stupendous the Trojans' cry and Achaians',
Dread upshouting as one when together they clashed in the conflict.

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ILIAD, xvii. 426

THE HORSES OF ACHILLES

So now the horses of Aiakides, off wide of the war-ground,
Wept, since first they were ware of their charioteer overthrown there,
Cast down low in the whirl of the dust under man-slaying Hector.
Sooth, meanwhile, then did Automedon, brave son of Diores,
Oft, on the one hand, urge them with flicks of the swift whip, and oft, too,
Coax entreatingly, hurriedly; whiles did he angrily threaten.
Vainly, for these would not to the ships, to the Hellespont spacious,
Backward turn, nor be whipped to the battle among the Achaians.
Nay, as a pillar remains immoveable, fixed on the tomb-stone,
Haply, of some dead man or it may be a woman there-under;
Even like hard stood they there attached to the glorious war-car,
Earthward bowed with their heads; and of them so lamenting incessant
Ran the hot teardrops downward on to the earth from their eyelids,
Mourning their charioteer; all their lustrous manes dusty-clotted,
Right side and left of the yoke-ring tossed, to the breadth of the yoke-bow.

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Now when the issue of Kronos beheld that sorrow, his head shook
Pitying them for their grief, these words then he spake in his bosom;
'Why, ye hapless, gave we to Peleus you, to a mortal
Master; ye that are ageless both, ye both of you deathless!
Was it that ye among men most wretched should come to have heart-grief?
'Tis most true, than the race of these men is there wretcheder nowhere
Aught over earth's range found that is gifted with breath and has movement.'

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THE MARES OF THE CAMARGUE

FROM THE 'MIRÈIO' OF MISTRAL

A HUNDRED mares, all white! their manes
Like mace-reed of the marshy plains
Thick-tufted, wavy, free o' the shears:
And when the fiery squadron rears
Bursting at speed, each mane appears
Even as the white scarf of a fay
Floating upon their necks along the heavens away.

O race of humankind, take shame!
For never yet a hand could tame,
Nor bitter spur that rips the flanks subdue
The mares of the Camargue. I have known,
By treason snared, some captives shown;
Expatriate from their native Rhone,
Led off, their saline pastures far from view:

And on a day, with prompt rebound,
They have flung their riders to the ground,
And at a single gallop, scouring free,
Wide nostril'd to the wind, twice ten
Of long marsh-leagues devour'd, and then,
Back to the Vacarés again,
After ten years of slavery just to breathe salt sea.

For of this savage race unbent
The ocean is the element.
Of old escaped from Neptune's car, full sure

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Still with the white foam fleck'd are they,
And when the sea puffs black from grey,
And ships part cables, loudly neigh
The stallions of Camargue, all joyful in the roar;

And keen as a whip they lash and crack
Their tails that drag the dust, and back
Scratch up the earth, and feel, entering their flesh, where he,
The God, drives deep his trident teeth,
Who in one horror, above, beneath,
Bids storm and watery deluge seethe,
And shatters to their depths the abysses of the sea.

Cant. iv.

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'ATKINS'

YONDER's the man with his life in his hand,
Legs on the march for whatever the land,
  Or to the slaughter, or to the maiming,
    Getting the dole of a dog for pay.
Laurels he clasps in the words 'duty done,'
England his heart under every sun:—
  Exquisite humour! that gives him a naming
    Base to the ear as an ass's bray.

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THE VOYAGE OF THE 'OPHIR'

MEN of our race, we send you one
Round whom Victoria's holy name
Is halo from the sunken sun
Of her grand Summer's day aflame.
The heart of your loved Motherland,
To them she loves as her own blood,
This Flower of Ocean bears in hand,
Assured of gift as good.

Forth for our Southern shores the fleet
Which crowns a nation's wisdom steams,
That there may Briton Briton greet,
And stamp as fact Imperial dreams.
Across the globe, from sea to sea,
The long smoke-pennon trails above,
Writes over sky how wise will be
The Power that trusts to love.

A love that springs from heart and brain
In union gives for ripest fruit
The concord Kings and States in vain
Have sought, who played the lofty brute,
And fondly deeming they possessed,
On force relied, and found it break:
That truth once scored on Britain's breast
Now keeps her mind awake.

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Australian, Canadian,
To tone old veins with streams of youth,
Our trust be on the best in man
Henceforth, and we shall prove that truth.
Prove to a world of brows down-bent
That in the Britain thus endowed,
Imperial means beneficent,
And strength to service vowed.

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THE CRISIS

SPIRIT of Russia, now has come
The day when thou canst not be dumb.
Around thee foams the torrent tide,
Above thee its fell fountain, Pride.
The senseless rock awaits thy word
To crumble; shall it be unheard?
Already, like a tempest-sun,
That shoots the flare and shuts to dun,
Thy land 'twixt flame and darkness heaves,
Showing the blade wherewith Fate cleaves,
If mortals in high courage fail
At the one breath before the gale.
Those rulers in all forms of lust,
Who trod thy children down to dust
On the red Sunday, know right well
What word for them thy voice would spell,
What quick perdition for them weave,
Did they in such a voice believe.
Not thine to raise the avenger's shriek,
Nor turn to them a Tolstoi cheek;
Nor menace him, the waverer still,
Man of much heart and little will,
The criminal of his high seat,
Whose plea of Guiltless judges it.
For him thy voice shall bring to hand
Salvation, and to thy torn land,
Seen on the breakers. Now has come
The day when thou canst not be dumb,

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Spirit of Russia:—those who bind
Thy limbs and iron-cap thy mind,
Take thee for quaking flesh, misdoubt
That thou art of the rabble rout
Which cries and flees, with whimpering lip,
From reckless gun and brutal whip;
But he who has at heart the deeds
Of thy heroic offspring reads
In them a soul; not given to shrink
From peril on the abyss's brink;
With never dread of murderous power;
With view beyond the crimson hour;
Neither an instinct-driven might,
Nor visionary erudite;
A soul; that art thou. It remains
For thee to stay thy children's veins,
The countertides of hate arrest,
Give to thy sons a breathing breast,
And Him resembling, in His sight,
Say to thy land, Let there be Light.

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OCTOBER 21, 1905

THE hundred years have passed, and he
Whose name appeased a nation's fears,
As with a hand laid over sea;
To thunder through the foeman's ears
Defeat before his blast of fire;
Lives in the immortality
That poets dream and noblest souls desire.

Never did nation's need evoke
Hero like him for aid, the while
A Continent was cannon-smoke
Or peace in slavery: this one Isle
Reflecting Nature: this one man
Her sea-hound and her mortal stroke,
With war-worn body aye in battle's van.

And do we love him well, as well
As he his country, we may greet,
With hand on steel, our passing bell
Nigh on the swing, for prelude sweet
To the music heard when his last breath
Hung on its ebb beside the knell,
And VICTORY in his ear sang gracious Death.

Ah, day of glory! day of tears!
Day of a people bowed as one!
Behold across those hundred years

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The lion flash of gun at gun:
Our bitter pride; our love bereaved;
What pall of cloud o'ercame our sun
That day, to bear his wreath, the end achieved.

Joy that no more with murder's frown
The ancient rivals bark apart.
Now Nelson to brave France is shown
A hero after her own heart:
And he now scanning that quick race,
To whom through life his glove was thrown,
Would know a sister spirit to embrace.

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THE CENTENARY OF GARIBALDI

We who have seen Italia in the throes,
Half risen but to be hurled to ground, and now
Like a ripe field of wheat where once drove plough
All bounteous as she is fair, we think of those
Who blew the breath of life into her frame:
Cavour, Mazzini, Garibaldi: Three:
Her Brain, her Soul, her Sword; and set her free
From ruinous discords, with one lustrous aim.

That aim, albeit they were of minds diverse,
Conjoined them, not to strive without surcease;
For them could be no babblement of peace
While lay their country under Slavery's curse.

The set of torn Italia's glorious day
Was ever sunrise in each filial breast.
Of eagle beaks by righteousness unblest
They felt her pulsing body made the prey.

Wherefore they struck, and had to count their
dead.
With bitter smile of resolution nerved
To try new issues, holding faith unswerved,
Promise they gathered from the rich blood shed.

In them Italia, visible to us then
As living, rose; for proof that huge brute Force
Has never being from celestial source,
And is the lord of cravens, not of men.

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Now breaking up the crust of temporal strife,
Who reads their acts enshrined in History, sees
That Tyrants were the Revolutionaries,
The Rebels men heart-vowed to hallowed life.

Pure as the Archangel's cleaving Darkness thro',
The Sword he sees, the keen unwearied Sword,
A single blade against a circling horde,
And aye for Freedom and the trampled few.

The cry of Liberty from dungeon cell,
From exile, was his God's command to smite,
As for a swim in sea he joined the fight,
With radiant face, full sure that he did well.

Behold a warrior dealing mortal strokes,
Whose nature was a child's: amid his foes
A wary trickster: at the battle's close,
No gentler friend this leopard dashed with fox.

Down the long roll of History will run
The story of these deeds, and speed his race
Beneath defeat more hotly to embrace
The noble cause and trust to another sun.

And lo, that sun is in Italia's skies
This day, by grace of his good sword in part.
It beckons her to keep a warrior heart
For guard of beauty, all too sweet a prize.

Earth gave him: blessèd be the Earth that gave.
Earth's Master crowned his honest work on earth:
Proudly Italia names his place of birth:
The bosom of Humanity his grave.

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THE WILD ROSE

HIGH climbs June's wild rose,
Her bush all blooms in a swarm;
And swift from the bud she blows,
In a day when the wooer is warm;
Frank to receive and give,
Her bosom is open to bee and sun:
Pride she has none,
Nor shame she knows;
Happy to live.

Unlike those of the garden nigh,
Her queenly sisters enthroned by art;
Loosening petals one by one
To the fiery Passion's dart
Superbly shy.
For them in some glory of hair,
Or nest of the heaving mounds to lie,
Or path of the bride bestrew.
Ever are they the theme for song.
But nought of that is her share.
Hardly from wayfarers tramping along,
A glance they care not to renew.

And she at a word of the claims of kin
Shrinks to the level of roads and meads:
She is only a plain princess of the weeds,
As an outcast witless of sin:
Much disregarded, save by the few

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Who love her, that has not a spot of deceit,
No promise of sweet beyond sweet,
Often descending to sour.
On any fair breast she would die in an hour.
Praises she scarce could bear,
Were any wild poet to praise.
Her aim is to rise into light and air.
One of the darlings of Earth, no more,
And little it seems in the dusty ways,
Unless to the grasses nodding beneath;
The bird clapping wings to soar,
The clouds of an evetide's wreath.

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THE CALL

UNDER what spell are we debased
By fears for our inviolate Isle,
Whose record is of dangers faced
And flung to heel with even smile?
Is it a vaster force, a subtler guile?

They say Exercitus designs
To match the famed Salsipotent
Where on her sceptre she reclines;
Awake: but were a slumber sent
By guilty gods, more fell his foul intent.

The subtler web, the vaster foe,
Well may we meet when drilled for deeds:
But in these days of wealth at flow,
A word of breezy warning breeds
The pained responses seen in lakeside reeds.

We fain would stand contemplative,
All innocent as meadow grass;
In human goodness fain believe,
Believe a cloud is formed to pass;
Its shadows chase with draughts of hippocras.

Others have gone; the way they went
Sweet sunny now, and safe our nest.
Humanity, enlightenment,
Against the warning hum protest:
Let the world hear that we know what is best.

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So do the beatific speak;
Yet have they ears, and eyes as well;
And if not with a paler cheek,
They feel the shivers in them dwell,
That something of a dubious future tell.

For huge possessions render slack
The power we need to hold them fast;
Save when a quickened heart shall make
Our people one, to meet what blast
May blow from temporal heavens overcast.

Our people one! Nor they with strength
Dependent on a single arm:
Alert, and braced the whole land's length,
Rejoicing in their manhood's charm
For friend or foe; to succour, not to harm.

Has ever weakness won esteem?
Or counts it as a prized ally?
They who have read in History deem
It ranks among the slavish fry,
Whose claim to live justiciary Fates deny.

It can not be declared we are
A nation till from end to end
The land can show such front to war
As bids a crouching foe expend
His ire in air, and preferably be friend.

We dreading him, we do him wrong;
For fears discolour, fears invite.
Like him, our task is to be strong;
Unlike him, claiming not by might
To snatch an envied treasure as a right.

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So may a stouter brotherhood
At home be signalled over sea
For righteous, and be understood,
Nay, welcomed, when 'tis shown that we
All duties have embraced in being free.

This Britain slumbering, she is rich;
Lies placid as a cradled child;
At times with an uneasy twitch,
That tells of dreams unduly wild.
Shall she be with a foreign drug defiled?

The grandeur of her deeds recall;
Look on her face so kindly fair:
This Britain! and were she to fall,
Mankind would breathe a harsher air,
The nations miss a light of leading rare.

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ON COMO

A RAINLESS darkness drew o'er the lake
As we lay in our boat with oars unshipped.
It seemed neither cloud nor water awake,
And forth of the low black curtain slipped
Thunderless lightning. Scoff no more
At angels imagined in downward flight
For the daughters of earth as fabled of yore:
Here was beauty might well invite
Dark heavens to gleam with the fire of a sun
Resurgent; here the exchanged embrace
Worthy of heaven and earth made one.

And witness it, ye of the privileged space,
Said the flash; and the mountains, as from an abyss
For quivering seconds leaped up to attest
That given, received, renewed was the kiss;
The lips to lips and the breast to breast;
All in a glory of ecstasy, swift
As an eagle at prey, and pure as the prayer
Of an infant bidden joined hands uplift
To be guarded through darkness by spirits of air,
Ere setting the sails of sleep till day.
Slowly the low cloud swung, and far
It panted along its mirrored way;
Above loose threads one sanctioning star,
The wonder of what had been witnessed, sealed,
And with me still as in crystal glassed
Are the depths alight, the heavens revealed,
Where on to the Alps the muteness passed.

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MILTON

DECEMBER 9, 1608: DECEMBER 9, 1908

WHAT splendour of imperial station man,
The Tree of Life, may reach when, rooted fast,
His branching stem points way to upper air
And skyward still aspires, we see in him
Who sang for us the Archangelical host,
Made Morning, by old Darkness urged to the abyss;
A voice that down three centuries onward rolls;
Onward will roll while lives our English tongue,
In the devout of music unsurpassed
Since Piety won Heaven's ear on Israel's harp.

The face of Earth, the soul of Earth, her charm,
Her dread austerity; the quavering fate
Of mortals with blind hope by passion swayed,
His mind embraced, the while on trodden soil,
Defender of the Commonwealth, he joined
Our temporal fray, whereof is vital fruit,
And, choosing armoury of the Scholar, stood
Beside his peers to raise the voice for Freedom:
Nor has fair Liberty a champion armed
To meet on heights or plains the Sophister
Throughout the ages, equal to this man,
Whose spirit breathed high Heaven, and drew thence
The ethereal sword to smite.

Were England sunk
Beneath the shifting tides, her heart, her brain,
The smile she wears, the faith she holds, her best,

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Would live full-toned in the grand delivery
Of his cathedral speech: an utterance
Almost divine, and such as Hellespont,
Crashing its breakers under Ida's frown,
Inspired: yet worthier he, whose instrument
Was by comparison the coarse reed-pipe;
Whereof have come the marvellous harmonies,
Which, with his lofty theme, of infinite range,
Abash, entrance, exalt.

We need him now,
This latest Age in repetition cries:
For Belial, the adroit, is in our midst;
Mammon, more swoln to squeeze the slavish sweat
From hopeless toil: and overshadowingly
(Aggrandized, monstrous in his grinning mask
Of hypocritical Peace,) inveterate Moloch
Remains the great example.

Homage to him
His debtor band, innumerable as waves
Running all golden from an eastern sun,
Joyfully render, in deep reverence
Subscribe, and as they speak their Milton's name,
Rays of his glory on their foreheads bear.

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IRELAND

FIRE in her ashes Ireland feels
And in her veins a glow of heat.
To her the lost old time appeals
For resurrection, good to greet:
Not as a shape with spectral eyes,
But humanly maternal, young
In all that quickens pride, and wise
To speak the best her bards have sung.

You read her as a land distraught,
Where bitterest rebel passions seethe.
Look with a core of heart in thought,
For so is known the truth beneath.
She came to you a loathing bride,
And it has been no happy bed.
Believe in her as friend, allied
By bonds as close as those who wed.

Her speech is held for hatred's cry;
Her silence tells of treason hid:
Were it her aim to burst the tie,
She sees what iron laws forbid.
Excess of heart obscures from view
A head as keen as yours to count.
Trust her, that she may prove her true
In links whereof is love the fount.

May she not call herself her own?
That is her cry, and thence her spits
Of fury, thence her graceless tone
At justice given in bits and bits.

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The limbs once raw with gnawing chains
  Will fret at silken when God's beams
Of Freedom beckon o'er the plains
  From mounts that show it more than dreams.

She, generous, craves your generous dole;
  That will not rouse the crack of doom.
It ends the blundering past control
  Simply to give her elbow-room.
Her offspring feels they are a race,
  To be a nation is their claim;
Yet stronger bound in your embrace
  Than when the tie was but a name.

A nation she, and formed to charm,
  With heart for heart and hands all round.
No longer England's broken arm,
  Would England know where strength is found.
And strength to-day is England's need;
  To-morrow it may be for both
Salvation: heed the portents, heed
  The warnings; free the mind from sloth.

Too long the pair have danced in mud,
  With no advance from sun to sun.
Ah, what a bounding course of blood
  Has England with an Ireland one!
Behold yon shadow cross the downs,
  And off away to yeasty seas.
Lightly will fly old rancour's frowns
  When solid with high heart stand these.

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THE YEARS HAD WORN THEIR SEASONS' BELT

THE years had worn their seasons' belt,
From bud to rosy prime,
Since Nellie by the larch-pole knelt
And helped the hop to climb.

Most diligent of teachers then,
But now with all to learn,
She breathed beyond a thought of men,
Though formed to make men burn.

She dwelt where 'twixt low-beaten thorns
Two mill-blades, like a snail,
Enormous, with inquiring horns,
Looked down on half the vale.

You know the grey of dew on grass
Ere with the young sun fired,
And you know well the thirst one has
For the coming and desired.

Quick in our ring she leapt, and gave
Her hand to left, to right.
No claim on her had any, save
To feed the joy of sight.

For man and maid a laughing word
She tossed, in notes as clear.
As when the February bird
Sings out that Spring is near.

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Of what befell behind that scene,
Let none who knows reveal.
In ballad days she might have been
A heroine rousing steel.

On us did she bestow the hour,
And fixed it firm in thought;
Her spirit like a meadow flower
That gives, and asks for nought.

She seemed to make the sunlight stay
And show her in its pride.
O she was fair as a beech in May
With the sun on the yonder side.

There was more life than breath can give,
In the looks in her fair form;
For little can we say we live
Until the heart is warm.

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FRAGMENTS

OPEN horizons round,
O mounting mind, to scenes unsung,
Wherein shall walk a lusty Time:
Our Earth is young;
Of measure without bound;
Infinite are the heights to climb,
The depths to sound.

A WILDING little stubble flower
The sickle scorned which cut for wheat,
Such was our hope in that dark hour
When nought save uses held the street,
And daily pleasures, daily needs,
With barren vision, looked ahead.
And still the same result of seeds
Gave likeness 'twixt the live and dead.

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From labours through the night, outworn,
Above the hills the front of morn
We see, whose eyes to heights are raised,
And the world's wise may deem us crazed.
While yet her lord lies under seas,
She takes us as the wind the trees'
Delighted leafage; all in song
We mount to her, to her belong.

This love of nature, that allures to take
Irregularity for harmony
Of larger scope than our hard measures make,
Cherish it as thy school for when on thee
The ills of life descend.

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IL Y A CENT ANS

THAT march of the funereal Past behold;
How Glory sat on Bondage for its throne;
How men, like dazzled insects, through the mould
Still worked their way, and bled to keep their own.

We know them, as they strove and wrought and yearned;
Their hopes, their fears; what page of Life they wist:
At whiles their vision upon us was turned,
Baffled by shapes limned loosely on thick mist.

Beneath the fortress bulk of Power they bent
Blunt heads, adoring or in shackled hate,
All save the rebel hymned him; and it meant
A world submitting to incarnate Fate.

From this he drew fresh appetite for sway,
And of it fell: whereat was chorus raised,
How surely shall a mad ambition pay
Dues to Humanity, erewhile amazed.

'Twas dreamed by some the deluge would ensue,
So trembling was the tension long constrained;
A spirit of faith was in the chosen few,
That steps to the millennium had been gained.

But mainly the rich business of the hour,
Their sight, made blind by urgency of blood,
Embraced; and facts, the passing sweet or sour,
To them were solid things that nought withstood.

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Their facts are going headlong on the tides,
  Like commas on a line of History's page;
Nor that which once they took for Truth abides,
  Save in the form of youth enlarged from age.

Meantime give ear to woodland notes around,
  Look on our Earth full-breasted to our sun:
So was it when their poets heard the sound,
  Beheld the scene: in them our days are one.

What figures will be shown the century hence?
  What lands intact? We do but know that Power
From piety divorced, though seen immense,
  Shall sink on envy of the humblest flower.

Our cry for cradled Peace, while men are still
  The three-parts brute which smothers the divine,
Heaven answers: Guard it with forethoughtful will,
  Or buy it; all your gains from War resign.

A land, not indefensibly alarmed,
  May see, unwarned by hint of friendly gods,
Between a hermit crab at all points armed,
  And one without a shell, decisive odds.

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YOUTH IN AGE

ONCE I was part of the music I heard
  On the boughs or sweet between earth and sky,
  For joy of the beating of wings on high
My heart shot into the breast of the bird.

I hear it now and I see it fly,
  And a life in wrinkles again is stirred,
  My heart shoots into the breast of the bird,
As it will for sheer love till the last long sigh.

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EPITAPHS

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TO A FRIEND LOST

(TOM TAYLOR)

WHEN I remember, friend, whom lost I call,
Because a man beloved is taken hence,
The tender humour and the fire of sense
In your good eyes; how full of heart for all,
And chiefly for the weaker by the wall,
You bore that lamp of sane benevolence;
Then see I round you Death his shadows dense
Divide, and at your feet his emblems fall.
For surely are you one with the white host,
Spirits, whose memory is our vital air,
Through the great love of Earth they had: lo, these,
Like beams that throw the path on tossing seas,
Can bid us feel we keep them in the ghost,
Partakers of a strife they joyed to share.

M. M.

WHO call her Mother and who calls her Wife
Look on her grave and see not Death but Life.

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THE LADY C. M.

To them that knew her, there is vital flame
In these the simple letters of her name.
To them that knew her not, be it but said,
So strong a spirit is not of the dead.

ON THE TOMBSTONE OF
JAMES CHRISTOPHER WILSON
(d. APRIL 11, 1884)
IN HEADLEY CHURCHYARD, SURREY

Thou our beloved and light of Earth hast crossed
The sea of darkness to the yonder shore.
There dost thou shine a light transferred, not lost,
Through love to kindle in our souls the more.

GORDON OF KHARTOUM

Of men he would have raised to light he fell:
In soul he conquered with those nerveless hands.
His country's pride and her abasement knell
The Man of England circled by the sands.

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J. C. M.

A FOUNTAIN of our sweetest, quick to spring
In fellowship abounding, here subsides:
And never passage of a cloud on wing
To gladden blue forgets him; near he hides.

THE EMPEROR FREDERICK OF OUR TIME

WITH Alfred and St. Louis he doth win
Grander than crowned head's mortuary dome:
His gentle heroic manhood enters in
The ever-flowering common heart for home.

ISLET THE DACHS

OUR Islet out of Helgoland, dismissed
From his quaint tenement, quits hates and loves.
There lived with us a wagging humourist
In that hound's arch dwarf-legged on boxing-gloves.

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ON HEARING THE NEWS FROM VENICE

(THE DEATH OF ROBERT BROWNING)

Now dumb is he who waked the world to speak,
And voiceless hangs the world beside his bier.
Our words are sobs, our cry of praise a tear:
We are the smitten mortal, we the weak.
We see a spirit on Earth's loftiest peak
Shine, and wing hence the way he makes more clear:
See a great Tree of Life that never sere
Dropped leaf for aught that age or storms might wreak.
Such ending is not Death: such living shows
What wide illumination brightness sheds
From one big heart, to conquer man's old foes:
The coward, and the tyrant, and the force
Of all those weedy monsters raising heads
When Song is murk from springs of turbid source.

December 13, 1889.

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HAWARDEN

WHEN comes the lighted day for men to read
Life's meaning, with the work before their hands
Till this good gift of breath from debt is freed,
Earth will not hear her children's wailful bands
Deplore the chieftain fall'n in sob and dirge;
Nor they look where is darkness, but on high.
The sun that dropped down our horizon's verge
Illumes his labours through the travelled sky,
Now seen in sum, most glorious; and 'tis known
By what our warrior wrought we hold him fast.
A splendid image built of man has flown;
His deeds inspired of God outstep a Past.
Ours the great privilege to have had one
Among us who celestial tasks has done.

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AT THE FUNERAL

FEBRUARY 2, 1901

HER sacred body bear: the tenement
Of that strong soul now ranked with God's Elect.
Her heart upon her people's heart she spent;
Hence is she Royalty's lodestar to direct.

The peace is hers, of whom all lands have praised
Majestic virtues ere her day unseen.
Aloft the name of Womanhood she raised,
And gave new readings to the Title, Queen.

ANGELA BURDETT-COUTTS

LONG with us, now she leaves us; she has rest
Beneath our sacred sod:
A woman vowed to Good, whom all attest,
The daylight gift of God.

THE YEAR'S SHEDDINGS

THE varied colours are a fitful heap:
They pass in constant service though they sleep;
The self gone out of them, therewith the pain:
Read that, who still to spell our earth remain.

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INDEX OF FIRST LINES

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INDEX OF FIRST LINES

	VOL.	PAGE
A Blackbird in a wicker cage,	i.	94
A breath of the mountains, fresh born in the regions majestic,	i.	30
A brook glancing under green leaves, self-delighting, exulting,	i.	29
A dove flew with an Olive Branch;	i.	11
A fountain of our sweetest, quick to spring	iii.	267
A hundred mares, all white! their manes	iii.	234
A message from her set his brain aflame.	i.	185
A princess in the eastern tale	i.	22
A rainless darkness drew o'er the lake	iii.	250
A revelation came on Jane	iii.	5
A roar thro' the tall twin elm-trees	i.	252
A Satyr spied a Goddess in her bath,	iii.	79
A wicked man is bad enough on earth;	i.	21
A wilding little stubble flower	iii.	257
A wind sways the pines,	ii.	240
All other joys of life he strove to warm,	i.	184
Along the garden terrace, under which	i.	217
Am I failing? For no longer can I cast	i.	209
An English heart, my commandant,	ii.	24
An inspiration caught from dubious hues	ii.	18
And—'Yonder look! yoho! yoho!	i.	3
Angelic love that stoops with heavenly lips	i.	32
As Puritans they prominently wax,	ii.	17
Ask, is Love divine,	iii.	30
Assured of worthiness we do not dread	ii.	14
At dinner, she is hostess, I am host	i.	197
At last we parley: we so strangely dumb	i.	226
At the coming up of Phoebus the all-luminous charioteer,	ii.	200
Avert, High Wisdom, never vainly wooed,	ii.	22
Awakes for me and leaps from shroud	iii.	175
Beneath the vans of doom did men pass in.	iii.	212
Between the fountain and the rill	iii.	211
'Bibber besotted, with scowl of a cur, having heart of a deer, thou!	iii.	223
Blue July, bright July,	i.	96
Bright Sirius! that when Orion pales	ii.	12
Bursts from a rending East in flaws	ii.	211
Bury thy sorrows, and they shall rise	i.	86
But where began the change; and what 's my crime?	i.	190
By this he knew she wept with waking eyes:	i.	181
Cannon his name,	iii.	116
Captive on a foreign shore,	i.	236

Digitized by Google

	VOL.	PAGE
Carols nature, counsel men.	ii.	88
Chillianwallah, Chillianwallah!	i.	1
Cistercians might crack their sides	ii.	161
Close Echo hears the woodman's axe,	ii.	268
Come to me in any shape!	i.	99
Day of the cloud in fleets! O day	ii.	215
Days, when the ball of our vision	iii.	68
Demeter devastated our good land,	ii.	226
Distraction is the panacea, Sir!	i.	207
Earth loves her young: a preference manifest:	ii.	270
Earth was not Earth before her sons appeared,	ii.	15
Enter these enchanted woods,	ii.	33
Fair and false! No dawn will greet	i.	49
Fair Mother Earth lay on her back last night,	i.	254
Fire in her ashes Ireland feels	iii.	253
Flat as to an eagle's eye,	ii.	162
Fleck of sky you are,	ii.	234
Flowers of the willow-herb are wool;	ii.	209
Follow me, follow me,	i.	46
For a Heracles in his fighting ire there is never the glory that follows	iii.	87
From labours through the night, outworn,	iii.	258
From twig to twig the spider weaves	ii.	237
Full faith I have she holds that rarest gift	i.	212
Give to imagination some pure light	i.	218
Gracefullest leaper, the dappled fox-cub	ii.	159
Grey with all honours of age! but fresh-featured and ruddy	i.	27
Hawk or shrike has done this deed	ii.	158
He felt the wild beast in him betweenwhiles	i.	189
He found her by the ocean's moaning verge,	i.	229
He leads: we hear our Seaman's call	iii.	100
He leaped. With none to hinder,	iii.	82
He rises and begins to round,	ii.	67
He who has looked upon Earth	ii.	49
'Heigh, boys!' cried Grandfather Bridgeman, 'it 's time before dinner to-day.'	i.	165
'Heigh me! brazen of front, thou glutton for plunder, how can one,	iii.	221
Her sacred body bear: the tenement	iii.	270
Her son, albeit the Muse's livery	ii.	19
Here Jack and Tom are paired with Moll and Meg.	i.	198
High climbs June's wild rose,	iii.	245
His Lady queen of woods to meet,	iii.	33
Historic be the survey of our kind,	ii.	271
How barren would this valley be,	i.	80
How big of breast our Mother Gaea laughed	iii.	170
How died Melissa none dares shape in words.	ii.	190

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	VOL.	PAGE
How low when angels fall their black descent,	i.	180
How many a thing which we cast to the ground,	i.	221
How smiles he at a generation ranked	i.	253
How sweet on sunny afternoons,	i.	74
I am not of those miserable males	i.	200
I am to follow her. There is much grace	i.	222
I bade my Lady think what she might mean.	i.	220
I cannot lose thee for a day,	i.	51
I chanced upon an early walk to spy	ii.	90
I know him, February's thrush,	ii.	220
I must be flattered. The imperious	i.	208
'I play for Seasons; not Eternities!'	i.	193
I see a fair young couple in a wood,	ii.	11
I stood at the gate of the cot	ii.	260
I think she sleeps: it must be sleep, when low	i.	195
I, wakeful for the skylark voice in men,	ii.	23
I would I were the drop of rain	i.	98
If that thou hast the gift of strength, then know,	iii.	210
In middle age an evil thing	ii.	116
In our old shipwrecked days there was an hour,	i.	196
'In Paris, at the Louvre, there have I seen	i.	213
In Progress you have little faith, say you:	ii.	16
It chanced his lips did meet her forehead cool.	i.	186
It ended, and the morrow brought the task.	i.	182
It is no vulgar nature I have wived.	i.	215
It is the season of the sweet wild rose,	i.	225
Joy is fleet,	iii.	31
Judge mildly the tasked world; and disincline	ii.	17
Keen as an eagle whose flight towards the dim empyréan	i.	29
Know you the low pervading breeze	i.	34
Ladies who in chains of wedlock	ii.	139
Lakes where the sunsheen is mystic with splendour and softness;	i.	27
Last night returning from my twilight walk	ii.	48
Leave the uproar: at a leap	ii.	239
Let Fate or Insufficiency provide	ii.	1
Like a flood river whirled at rocky banks,	iii.	200
Like as a terrible fire feeds fast on a forest enormous,	iii.	225
Like to some deep-chested organ whose grand inspiration,	i.	28
Lo, as a tree, whose wintry twigs	i.	79
Long with us, now she leaves us; she has rest	iii.	270
Love ere he bleeds, an eagle in high skies,	i.	206
Love is winged for two,	iii.	30
Love within the lover's breast	i.	16
Madam would speak with me. So, now it comes:	i.	214
Maimed, beggared, grey; seeking an alms; with nod	ii.	197
Mark where the pressing wind shoots javelin-like	i.	223

Digitized by Google

	VOL. PAGE
Melpomene among her livid people,	ii. 115
Men of our race, we send you one	iii. 237
Men the Angels eyed ;	ii. 186
Merrily 'mid the faded leaves,	i. 114
Musing on the fate of Daphne,	i. 52
My Lady unto Madam makes her bow.	i. 216
Never, O never,	i. 40
Night, like a dying mother,	i. 249
No, no, the falling blossom is no sign	i. 93
No state is enviable. To the luck alone	i. 199
Not ere the bitter herb we taste,	iii. 31
Not solely that the Future she destroys,	i. 192
Not solitarily in fields we find	ii. 13
Not the sea-wave so bellows abroad when it bursts upon shingle,	iii. 231
Not vainly doth the earnest voice of man	i. 164
Not yet had History's Aetna smoked the skies,	iii. 105
Now dumb is he who waked the world to speak,	iii. 268
Now farewell to you ! you are	ii. 2
Now from the meadow floods the wild duck clamours,	i. 79
Now standing on this hedgeside path,	i. 78
Now the frog, all lean and weak,	i. 126
Now the North wind ceases,	iii. 85
Now, this, to my notion, is pleasant cheer,	i. 146
Now 'tis Spring on wood and wold,	i. 124
O briar-scents, on yon wet wing	iii. 81
O might I load my arms with thee,	i. 139
O my lover ! the night like a broad smooth wave	i. 250
O nightingale ! how hast thou learnt	i. 123
O skylark ! I see thee and call thee joy !	i. 84
Of me and of my theme think what thou wilt :	ii. 21
Of men he would have raised to light he fell :	iii. 266
On a starred night Prince Lucifer uprose	ii. 12
On her great venture, Man,	ii. 92
On my darling's bosom	i. 240
On the morning of May,	ii. 241
On yonder hills soft twilight dwells	i. 112
Once I was part of the music I heard	iii. 261
One fairest of the ripe unwedded left	iii. 15
Open horizons round,	iii. 257
Oracle of the market ! thence you drew	ii. 20
Or shall we run with Artemis	iii. 185
Our Islet out of Helgoland, dismissed	iii. 267
Out in the yellow meadows, where the bee	i. 191
Picture some Isle smiling green 'mid the white-foaming ocean ;—	i. 28
Pitch here the tent, while the old horse grazes :	i. 134
Prince of Bards was old Aneurin ;	ii. 180
Projected from the bilious Childe,	ii. 160

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	VOL. PAGE
Queen Theodolind has built	ii. 133
Rich labour is the struggle to be wise,	ii. 15
Rub thou thy battered lamp : nor claim nor beg	ii. 16
See the sweet women, friend, that lean beneath	ii. 100
Seen, too clear and historic within us, our sins of omission	iii. 211
See 'st thou a Skylark whose glistening winglets ascending	i. 30
Sharp is the night, but stars with frost alive	ii. 271
She can be as wise as we,	i. 248
She issues radiant from her dressing-room,	i. 187
She yields : my Lady in her noblest mood	i. 219
Should thy love die ;	i. 163
'Sirs ! may I shake your hands ?	i. 231
Sleek as a lizard at round of a stone,	iii. 75
So he, with a clear shout of laughter,	iii. 228
So now the horses of Aiakides, off wide of the war-ground,	iii. 232
Spirit of Russia, now has come	iii. 239
Sprung of the father blood, the mother brain,	iii. 89
Strike not thy dog with a stick !	ii. 27
Summer glows warm on the meadows, and speedwell, and gold-cups, and daisies	i. 81
Sunset worn to its last vermilion he ;	iii. 209
Swathed round in mist and crown'd with cloud,	i. 92
Sweet as Eden is the air,	ii. 235
Swept from his fleet upon that fatal night	i. 100
Sword in length a reaping-hook amain	ii. 154
Sword of Common Sense !—	iii. 56
Take thy lute and sing	i. 37
That Garden of sedate Philosophy	ii. 18
That march of the funereal Past behold ;	iii. 259
That was the chirp of Ariel	iii. 32
The buried voice bespake Antigone	i. 90
The clouds are withdrawn	i. 117
The daisy now is out upon the green ;	i. 115
The day that is the night of days,	iii. 83
The Flower unfolds its dawning cup,	i. 88
The golden head has wit in it. I live,	i. 211
The hundred years have passed, and he	iii. 241
The long cloud edged with streaming grey	i. 128
The misery is greater, as I live !	i. 204
The moon is alone in the sky	i. 21
The old coach-road through a common of furze,	i. 145
The old grey Alp has caught the cloud,	i. 151
The old grey mother she thrummed on her knee :	i. 241
The old hound wags his shaggy tail,	i. 132
The senses loving Earth or well or ill	ii. 13
The shepherd with his eye on hazy South,	ii. 231
The silence of preluded song—	i. 42
The sister Hours in circles linked,	iii. 150
The Snowdrop is the prophet of the flowers ;	i. 17

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	VOL.	PAGE
The song of a nightingale sent thro' a slumbrous valley,	i.	31
The spirit of Romance dies not to those	i.	120
The Tyrant passed, and friendlier was his eye	ii.	195
The varied colours are a fitful heap :	iii.	270
The wind is East, the wind is West,	iii.	1
The years had worn their seasons' belt,	iii.	255
Their sense is with their senses all mixed in,	i.	228
There she goes up the street with her book in her hand,	i.	261
There stands a singer in the street,	i.	68
There were three maidens met on the highway ;	i.	131
These, then, he left, and away where ranks were now clashing the thickest,	iii.	227
They have no song, the sedges dry,	iii.	210
They say, that Pity in Love's service dwells,	i.	224
They then to fountain-abundant Ida, mother of wild beasts,	iii.	230
This golden head has wit in it. I live	i.	211
This love of nature, that allures to take	iii.	258
This Riddle rede or die,	iii.	14
This was the woman ; what now of the man ?	i.	183
Thou our beloved and light of Earth hast crossed	iii.	266
Thou, run to the dry on this wayside bank,	iii.	34
Thou to me art such a spring	i.	89
Though I am faithful to my loves lived through,	i.	249
Through the water-eye of night,	iii.	186
Thus piteously Love closed what he begat :	i.	230
Thy greatest knew thee, Mother Earth ; unsoured	i.	253
'Tis Christmas weather, and a country house	i.	203
'Tis true the wisdom that my mind exacts	ii.	21
To sit on History in an easy chair,	iii.	99
To Thee, dear God of Mercy, both appeal,	iii.	178
To them that knew her, there is vital flame	iii.	266
Two flower-enfolding crystal vases she	ii.	14
Two wedded lovers watched the rising moon,	i.	50
Under boughs of breathing May,	i.	73
Under what spell are we debased	iii.	247
Under yonder beech-tree single on the green-sward,	ii.	80
Unhappy poets of a sunken prime !	ii.	19
Unto that love must we through fire attain,	iii.	208
Violets, shy violets !	i.	31
We have seen mighty men ballooning high,	iii.	99
We look for her that sunlike stood	iii.	140
We saw the swallows gathering in the sky,	i.	227
We spend our lives in learning pilotage,	ii.	270
We three are on the cedar-shadowed lawn ;	i.	201
We who have seen Italia in the throes,	iii.	243
What are we first ? First, animals ; and next	i.	210
What is the name of King Ringang's daughter ?	i.	9
What links are ours with orbs that are	ii.	265
What may the woman labour to confess ?	i.	202

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	VOL.	PAGE
What say you, critic, now you have become	ii.	20
What soul would bargain for a cure that brings	i.	194
What splendour of imperial station man,	iii.	251
Whate'er I be, old England is my dam!	i.	158
When April with her wild blue eye	i.	19
When buds of palm do burst and spread	i.	85
When by Zeus relenting the mandate was revoked,	ii.	71
When comes the lighted day for men to read	iii.	269
When I remember, friend, whom lost I call,	iii.	265
When I would image her features,	i.	252
When nuts behind the hazel-leaf	i.	85
When Sir Gawain was led to his bridal-bed,	i.	129
When the Head of Bran	i.	141
When the South sang like a nightingale	ii.	144
When we have thrown off this old suit,	ii.	236
Where faces are hueless, where eyelids are dewless,	i.	36
Who call her Mother and who calls her Wife	iii.	265
Who murmurs, hither, hither: who	iii.	189
With Alfred and St. Louis he doth win	iii.	267
With Life and Death I walked when Love appeared,	ii.	261
With love exceeding a simple love of the things	ii.	75
With sagest craft Arachne worked	iii.	179
With splendour of a silver day,	iii.	76
Within a Temple of the Toes,	i.	152
Yet it was plain she struggled, and that salt	i.	188
Yon upland slope which hides the sun	i.	76
Yonder 's the man with his life in his hand,	iii.	236
You like not that French novel? Tell me why.	i.	205
Young captain of a crasy bark!	ii.	187

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